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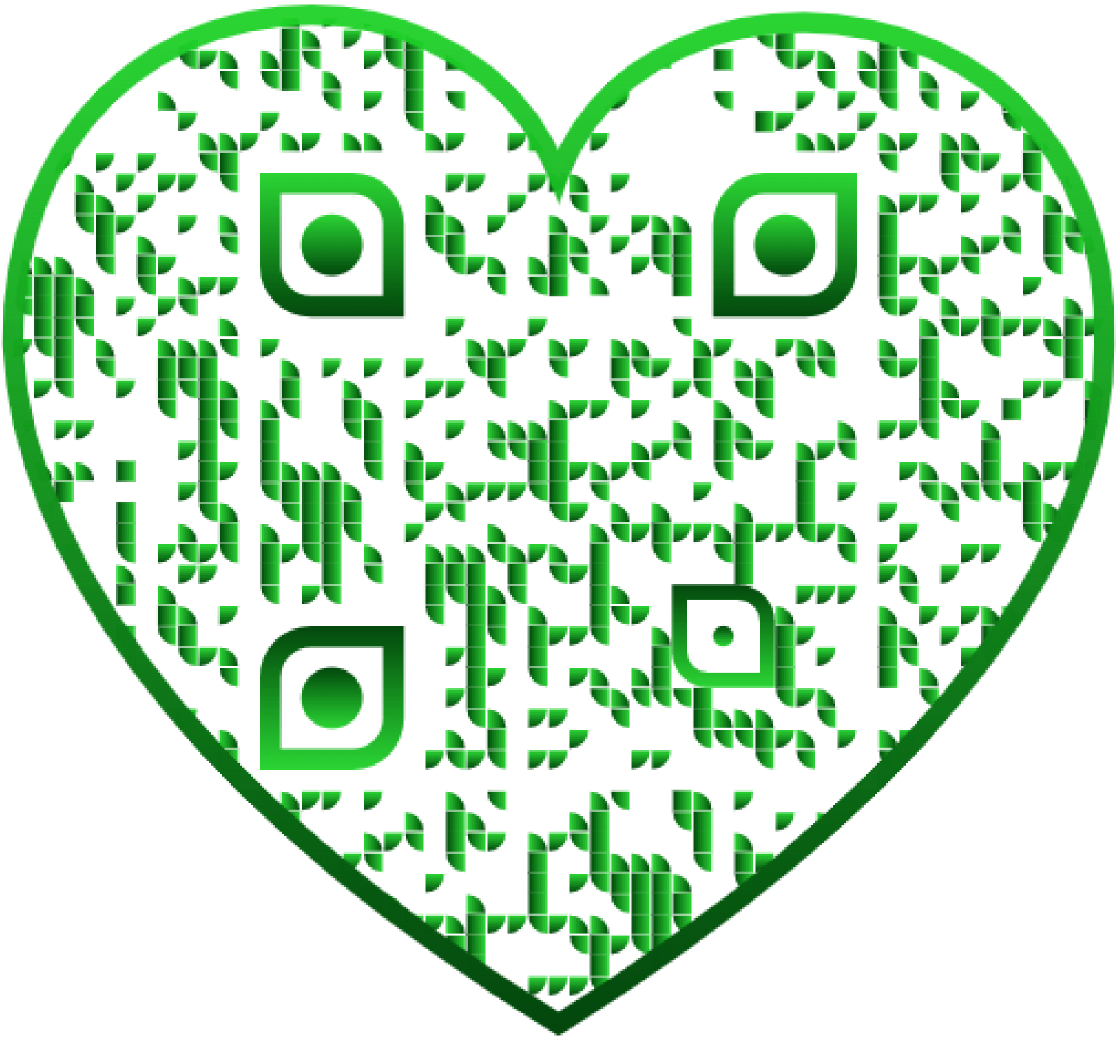
FROM THE SMITHS TO D.A.R.K...
THE LEGEND SPEAKS!



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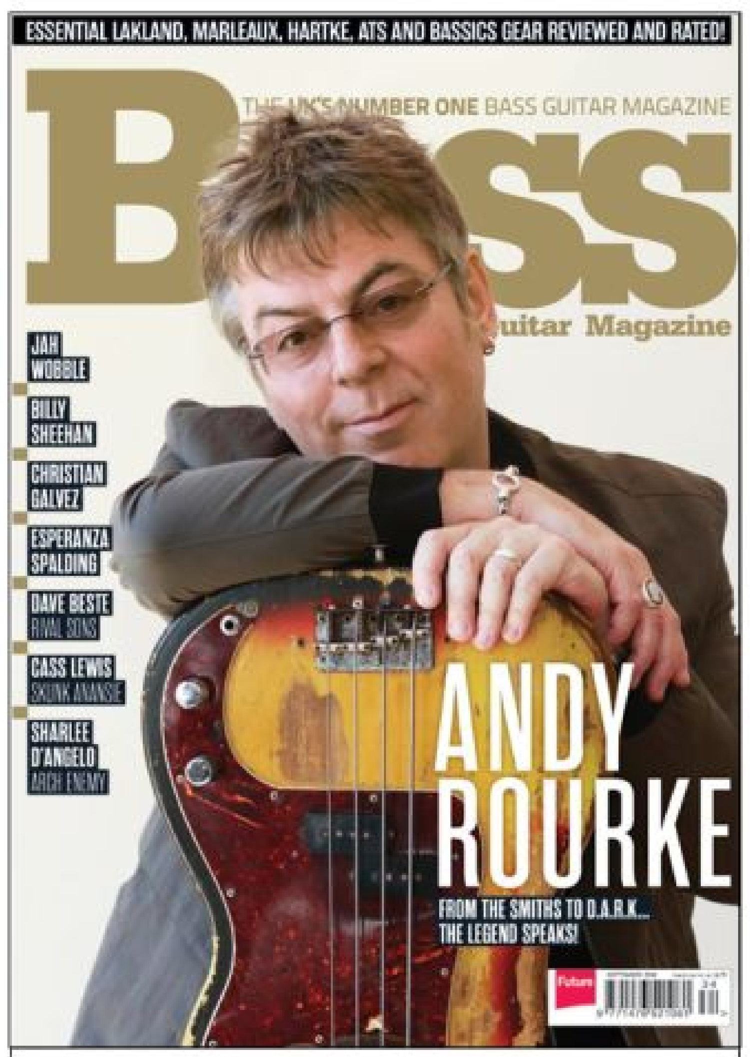

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The Smiths were the Marmite band to end all Marmite bands. Millions of 80s kids loved and loathed their songs in pretty much equal measure – outside bass world, at least. In our community, you'll be hard pressed to find anyone who isn't consistently impressed by Andy Rourke's amazing, tasteful bass parts. A master of the walking line and the subtle fill, and blessed with a phenomenal tone that cut through layers of guitars with ease, Rourke led the way for many of us. And now he's back after some years of relatively low-key activity, laying down the lines in a new band, D.A.R.K., also featuring Dolores O'Riordan of the Cranberries. It's a genuine scoop for us to feature Rourke on our cover: we couldn't be more delighted.

The same goes for the rest of this star-packed issue of *BGM*. Jah Wobble, Billy Sheehan, Cass Lewis, Esperanza Spalding... the big names just keep coming, and that's before we get to the lesser-known (but equally astounding) bass playing of Sharlee D'Angelo and Christian Galvez (can you imagine Stanley Clarke asking you to join his band... on bass?). Then there's our world-class review and tuition sections, stuffed with useful info for anyone who wants to make the low frequencies their home. Enjoy!

One last thing. It's early days, of course, but make sure you book a visit to the London Bass Guitar Show 2017 into your diary. It's on 4 and 5 March at London's Olympia venue – and once again, it's going to be the highlight of our year. See you next month!

Joel McIver, editor

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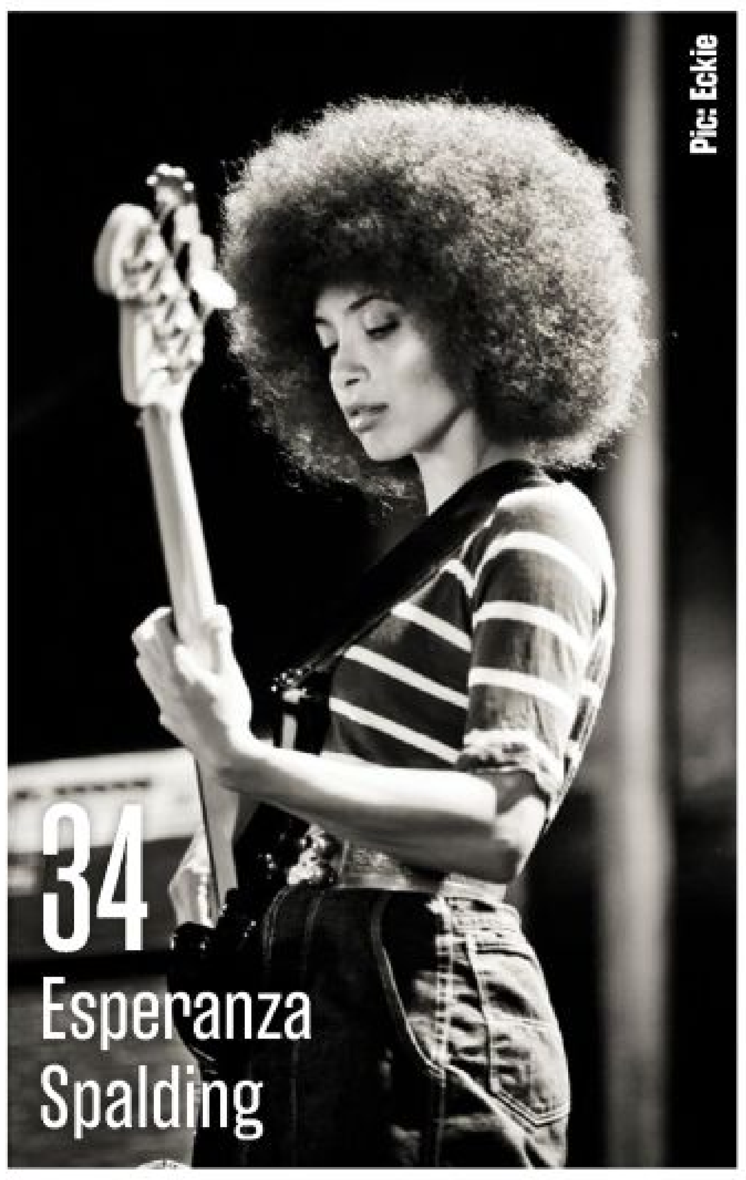

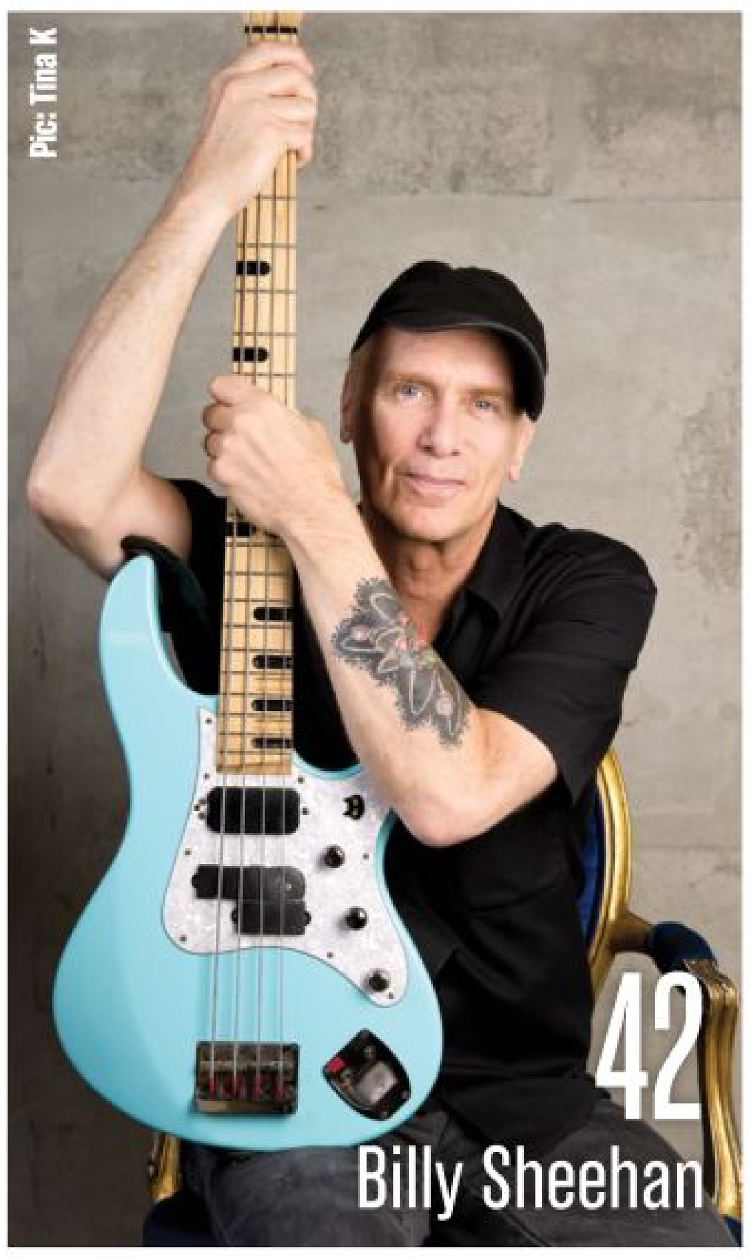

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THE LOW DOWN

News and views from the bass world, collated by BGM's team of intrepid newshounds

CELEBRATING CLIFF

Readers of the head-banging persuasion may know that *BGM* editor Joel McIver wrote a bestselling biography of the late Metallica bassist Cliff Burton back in 2009: a new, expanded version is scheduled for release in September, 30 years to the month after Cliff's death at the age of 24.

The original foreword by Metallica guitarist Kirk Hammett is complemented by a new afterword by Anthrax bassist Frank Bello, a close friend of Cliff's and his touring companion on the European tour in autumn 1986, in which Cliff lost his life in a bus crash. *To Live Is To Die: The Life And Death Of Metallica's Cliff Burton* includes interviews with a host of people close to Cliff, including his bass teacher Steve Doherty; Bay Area photographers and authors Brian Lew and Harald Oimoen; Exodus founder Gary Holt; Metal Blade label founder Brian Slagel; photographer Ross alfin; Cliff's first guitar tech Chuck Martin; Metallica's first fanclub manager KJ Doughton; Ride The Lightning and Master Of Puppets producer Flemming Rasmussen; the last reporter to interview Cliff, Jörgen Holmstedt; roadie John Marshall, who was also in the bus crash which killed Burton; Lennart Wennberg, the photographer at the scene of the crash; and Cliff's girlfriend for the last year of his life, Corinne Lynn.

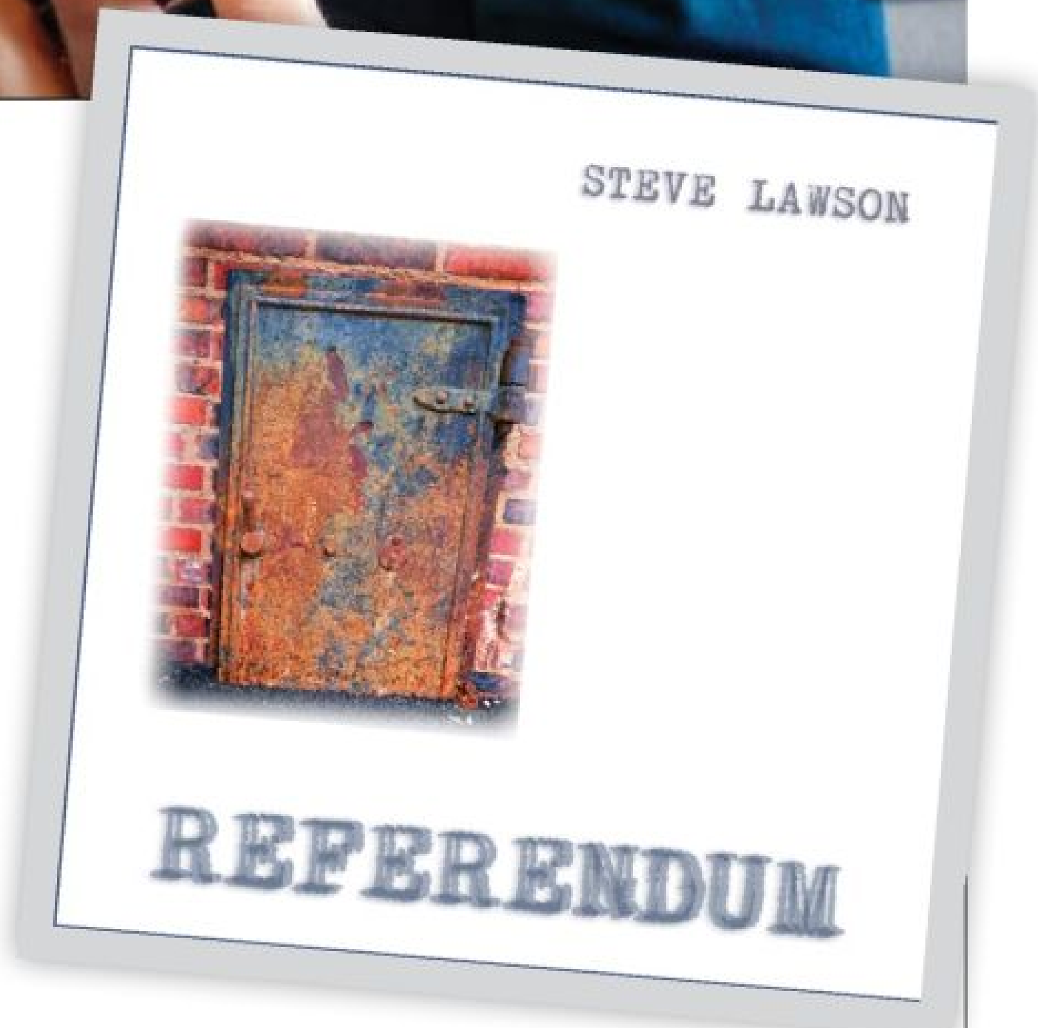
Info: www.jawbonepress.com.

THE F WORD

Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea – or Michael Balzary to his accountant – has announced a signature Fender Jazz in a shell pink finish. The new bass is a recreation of Flea's own '61 Jazz, given to him by a Chilis fan after the fleet-fingered bassist put out a public request for a pre-CBS Jazz, in his words "so he could be as cool as John Paul Jones."

The Flea Jazz, which has an RRP of around £900, comes with a pair of vintage-style, American-made Pure Vintage '64 Jazz Bass single-coil pickups, stacked concentric controls and (crucially) a period-accurate 20-fret C-shaped maple neck with Fender's 'Road Worn' nitrocellulose lacquer finish on the back, loaded with a 7.25"-radius rosewood fingerboard with a 1.5" wide nut. As the boffins at Fender tell us: "Shell Pink is the rarest of Fender's classic Custom Colour finishes, and Flea's '61 Jazz Bass is quite possibly the only one in existence. We've carefully recreated his personal instrument's exact faded shade as it exists today, and then applied an eye-catching Road Worn nitrocellulose lacquer finish that perfectly replicates Flea's playing wear. A special neck plate engraved with Flea's own artwork commemorates the inspiration behind this instrument."

HE IS THE LAW



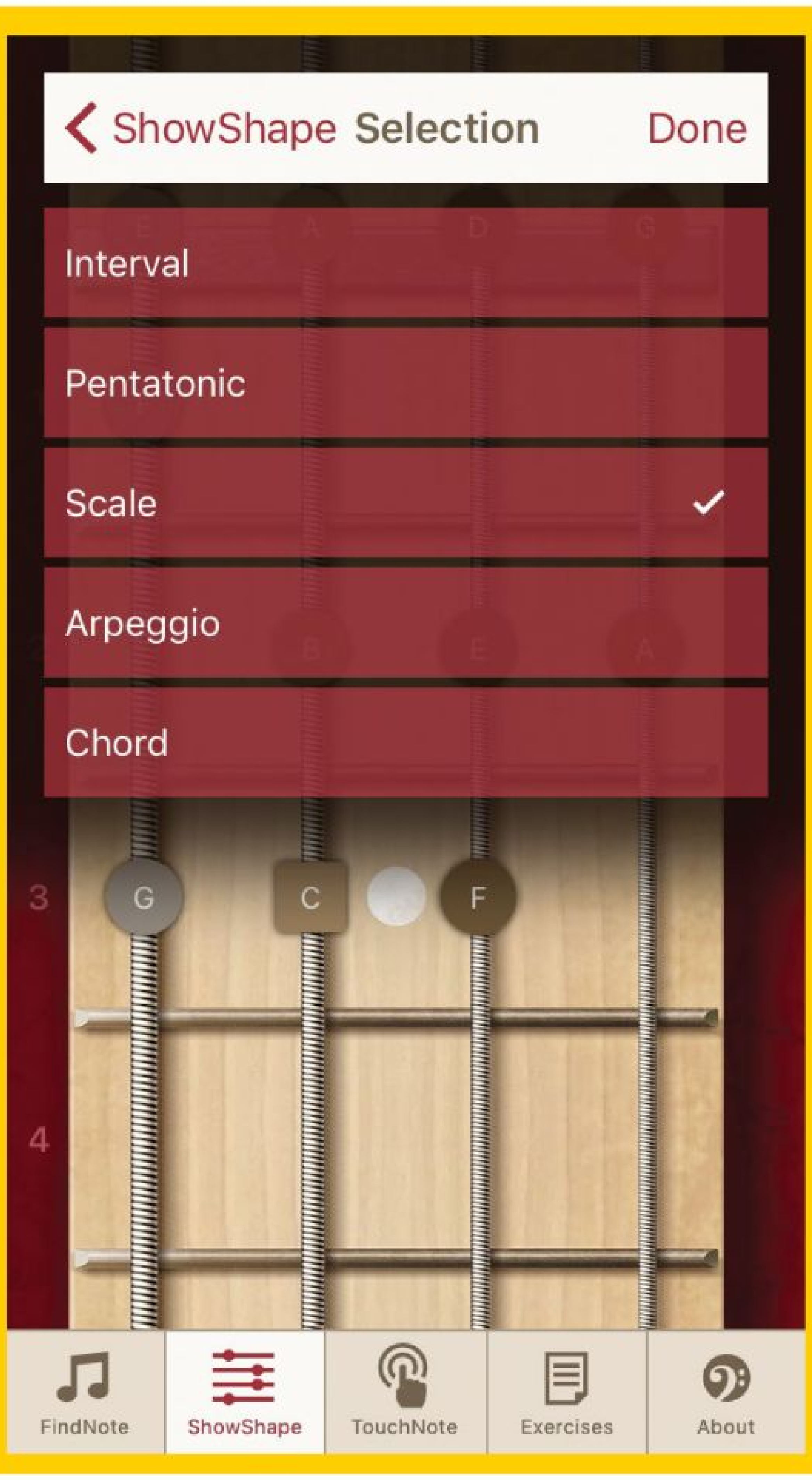
Ace bassist and *BGM* contrib Steve Lawson's been very busy of late. Currently working on the as-yet-untitled follow up to last year's *A Crack Where The Light Gets In* and *The Way Home*, he's also just released an instrumental reflection on recent political events, aptly titled *Referendum*. Says Steve: "It's four tracks recorded before the vote and two the morning after. Instrumental music is what happens when I run out of words, when talking about a thing fails to get to the heart of how I feel about it. This is very much coming from that place." *Referendum*, which features Steve's new Elrick Gold Series SLC signature fretted six-string, is available from music.stevelawson.net. If you sign up for Steve's £20 per year subscription you'll get access to all the video updates of the tracks he's working on for the new album, plus the album itself.

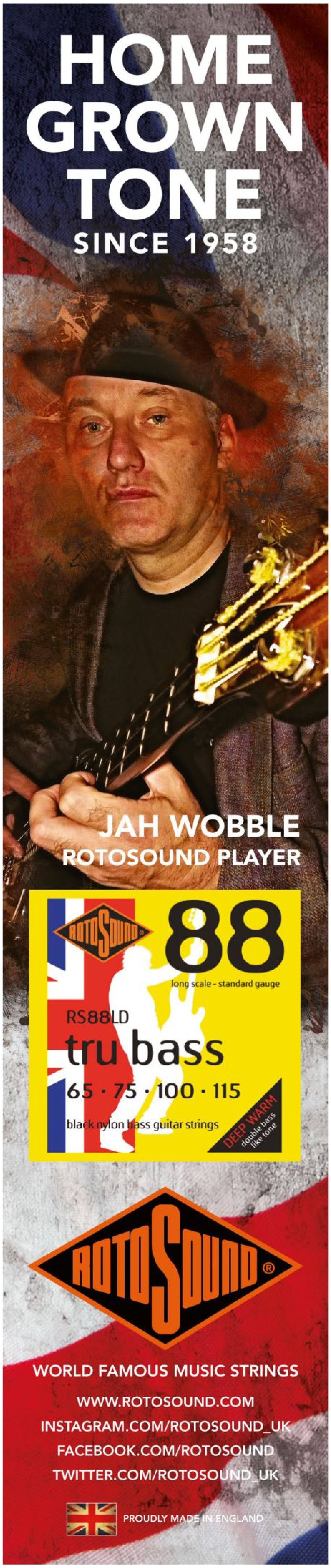
Info: music.stevelawson.net

APPY DAYS

BassNav is a new app for the IOS platform which, its maker claims, will "bring light to the dark parts of your fretboard". Developer Markus Setzer tells *BGM*, "It doesn't matter if you play four, five or six strings: over more than 25 years of teaching bass, I learned about the daily struggle which a lot of players go through to find the right notes on their fretboard and combine them in a satisfying way. These are their most common questions: where can I find a particular note on my fretboard? Are there other ways to play this note? Are there other positions on my fretboard? How do I accompany a certain chord? How do I play a certain scale in a particular part of my fretboard? These questions are the reasons I developed Bassnav, which can find everything for you – notes, scales, pentatonics, arpeggios and chords in every part of your fretboard. Touch the fretboard on your display and Bassnav will show you the name of the note you've picked and where else to find it."

Info: www.markussetzer.com





RATTED

BGM **was recently among a select group of journalists who accompanied Rage** Against The Machine bassist Tim Commerford on a jaunt around London to launch his new hardcore punk band, Wakrat. The trip, executed on a red double-decker bus with the new tunes played at unsociable volume, took in a visit to Parliament, where Commerford led a group of peaceful protesters on a 10-minute procession. A security guard attempted to intervene but failed to make any headway: the power of rock was clearly too much for him. We took him to one side and explained that the march was a record-company stunt, but he just looked at us as if we were mad. Later, we attended Wakrat's debut gig at the Black Heart in Camden and enjoyed a refreshing beverage with Commerford afterwards: we admired his choice of reading material (pictured).

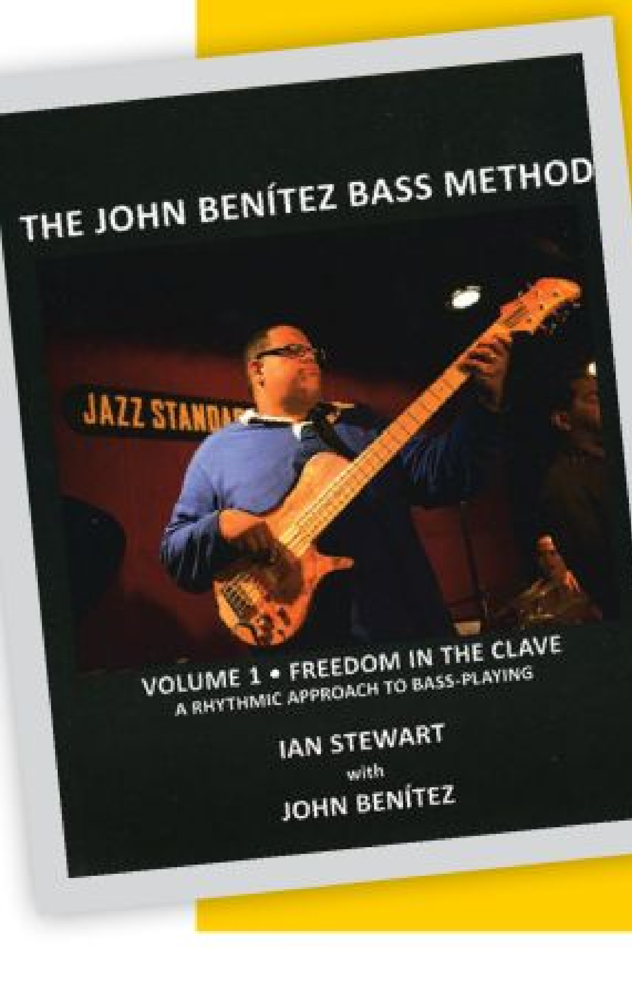
DANNY BOY

Danelectro have announced the arrival of the 59DC Long Scale Bass, available for a UK RRP of £499. As its name implies, it comes equipped with a 34" scale as well as those instantly-recognisable high impedance, high output lipstick pickups and black or copper burst finishes.

TURN THE PAGE

***The John Benítez Bass Method,* written by Ian Stewart** and acclaimed Puerto Rican bassist John Benítez is perfect for any bass player looking to improve their Latin playing, although the benefits of studying this material extend far beyond the style. Stewart and Benítez delve deeply into the clave, the rhythmic backbone of Latin music, and indeed all of the exercises in the book use its different forms. Many of the exercises are designed to help the reader 'feel' two opposing rhythms: the underlying clave feel and the line that they are playing. To that end, the exercises are based around playing two-bar rhythmic phrases against the clave – and some of them are extremely rhythmically challenging (quintuplets, anyone?). Don't be fooled: being able to read and play these rhythms while tapping the clave pulse with your foot is an undeniable skill, the value of which should not be underestimated. The book also covers tumbao lines in detail and supports everything with a number of detailed transcriptions of Benítez's lines. This is a serious piece of study material for any bass player and for those looking to enhance their Latin chops it's a no-brainer. It's available now from Amazon in both print and Kindle formats.

Stuart Clayton

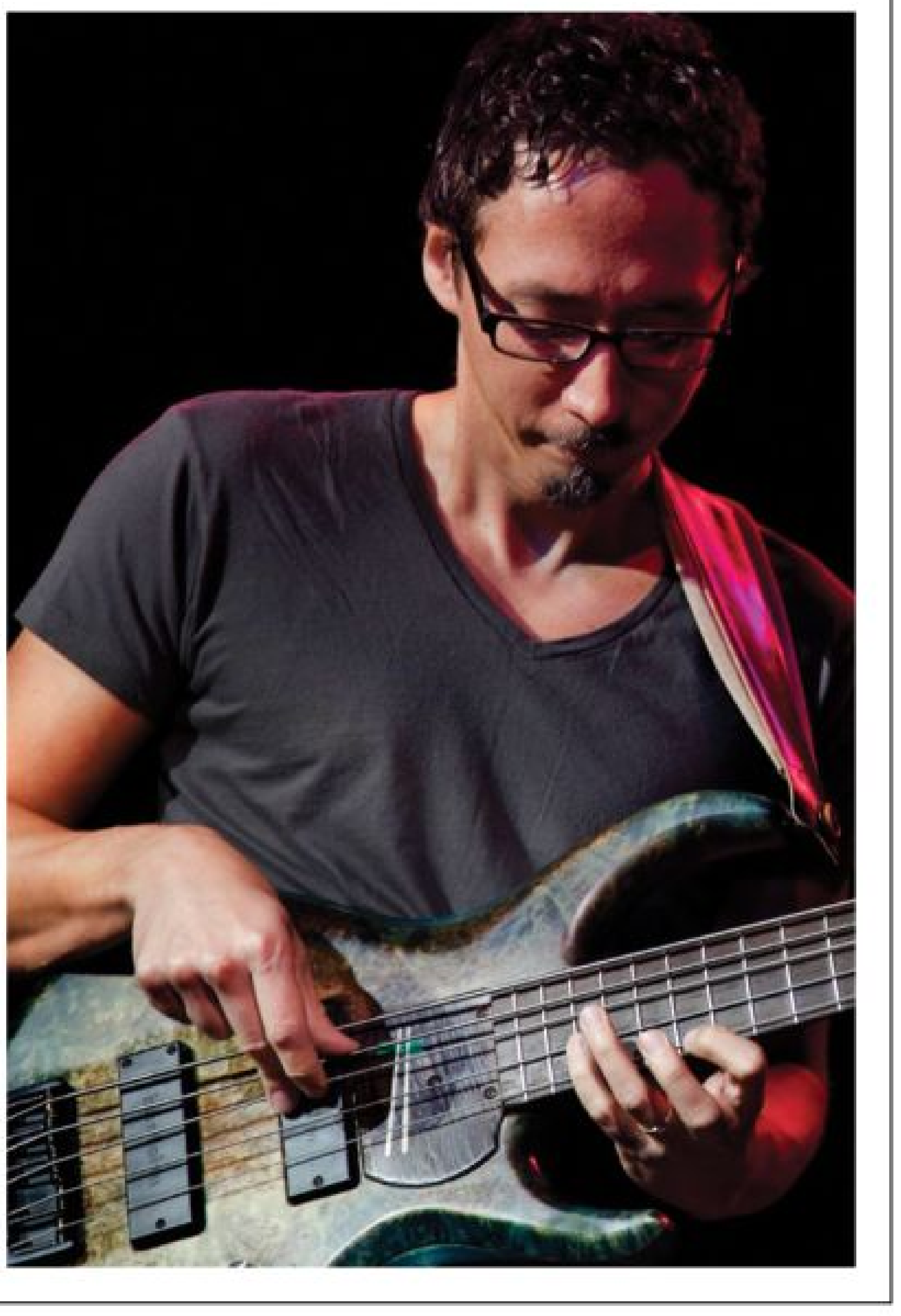


OUTSIDE THE NORM

Acclaimed bassist and educator Norm Stockton will join our friends at Bass Direct in Warwick on Wednesday 7 September for a free-entry clinic. From 2006-2012, he was the touring and recording bassist with chart-topping worship artist (and former Steve Perry guitarist) Lincoln Brewster. Stockton's recently-released second solo project, Tea In The Typhoon, featured stellar guest artists such as John Patitucci, Gregg Bissonette, Lincoln Brewster, Michael Manring, Etienne Mbappe and more.

The Norm Stockton Clinic will take place on Wednesday 7 September 2016 starting at 7pm at the Bass Direct Store, Warwick.

Info: http://bassdirect.co.uk



BASSWATCH

Every month, keen bass-spotter Ray Walker brings us an online bargain.

Fender USA Standard Jazz (2008) £650 ono

Here we have a Fender USA Standard Jazz that went for half the retail price. With the US Standard, we get the string-through-body option, lightweight machine heads and premium wood. This bass is a rarity on eBay at this price. Although its slim neck profile may not be everyone's cup of tea, the three-tone sunburst and maple fretboard is a winning combination. This is a solid weapon of choice regardless of your musical style. Although it has a couple of dings on it, I'm sure it's left a regretful (ex-) owner behind. Let it go man, let it go.

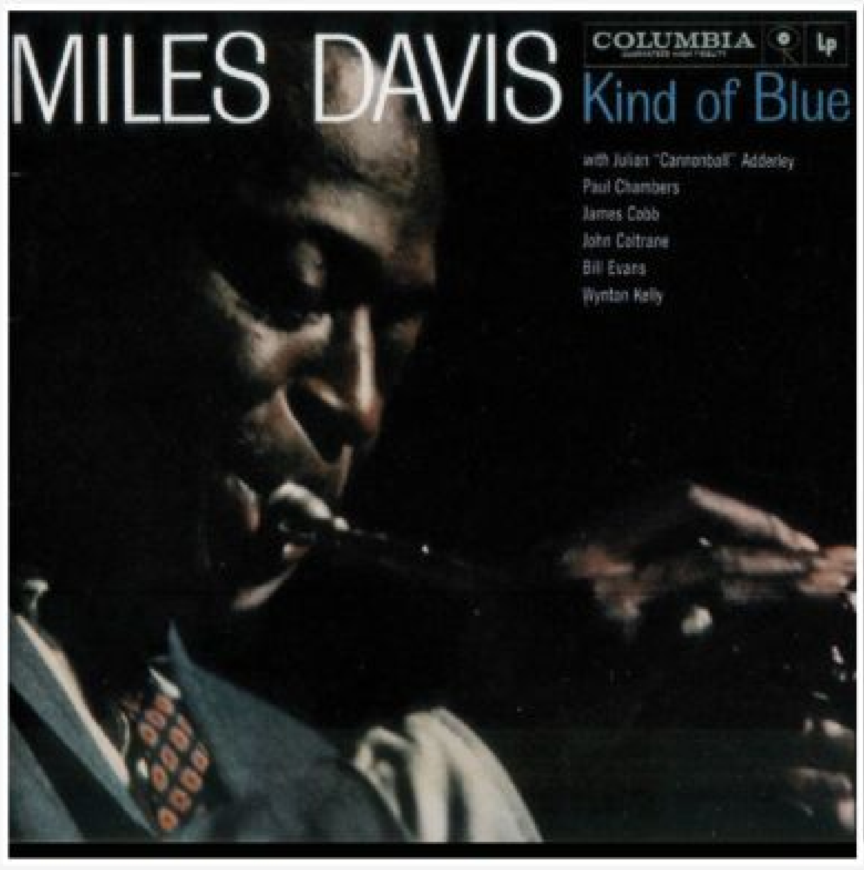
REVOLVER

Every month we tell you the bass-line we can't stop listening to

THIS MONTH: Miles Davis 'So What?' (1959)

Bassist: Paul Chambers

Miles Davis's fusion period is so beloved by electric bassists that it's sometimes easy to forget how astounding some of the bass parts on his earlier albums were. *Kind Of Blue*, perhaps the best-known jazz album of them all, was experimental in its approach, placing modes at the heart of the songwriting and improvisation, and kicks off with the amazing 'So What'. The intro, an interplay between Bill Evans' ethereal piano playing and Paul Chambers' subtle but firm upright bass parts, gives us one of the most famous bass riffs of all. All self-respecting bass players, electric or upright, should master it without delay.



BAXTER BASS

It's safe to say that vintage bass dealer Andy Baxter knows a thing or two about vintage basses, which is why, from next month, he will host a series of features in these pages looking at classic basses. However, there's more than one string to Andy's (vintage) bow. He also knows his vintage tube bass amps – as a quick visit to his Hoxton showroom attests. By way of sneak peek, we asked Andy to talk us through the history of one of his favourites, the Ampeg B-15 Amplifier.

"When Ampeg introduced the B-15 Portaflex in 1960, it set the standard for all future bass amplification, quickly becoming the most popular bass amp in the world," says Andy. "The B-15 underwent constant change through the 60s. As such the B-15 was replaced by the B-15N in 1961. In 1962, Ampeg updated the B-15N with a solid-state rectifier called the B-15NB and introduced their famous blue check vinyl covering to their entire amp line. Ampeg went back to a tube rectifier and changed to a printed circuit board in 1964 (B-15NC). This model lasted until mid 1965, when they introduced the B-15NF with fixed bias tubes and a single-baffle cabinet. The blue checked Tolex remained a feature until mid '67; at this point black Tolex was introduced with a silver trim around the front edge of the cab."

For a look at this Motown stalwart in the flesh visit Andy's Hoxton showroom or visit:
www.andybaxterbass.com

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BASSICALLY SPEAKING

Bassists reveal the tricks of their trade faster than a snapping D string

© Sarah Bowers

GEAR

BASSES Epiphone SG, Roland PK5 Bass pedals with Korg Volca Bass sound box
EFFECTS Boss TU-2, Electro Harmonix White Finger, EHX Small Clone Chorus, Crybaby
AMPS Trace Elliot BLX80 Combo, Eminence Speaker

MATTHEW NORTH SECRETS FOR SEPTEMBER

Andy Fraser and Jack Bruce are my primary influences in playing bass, although a bit of reggae gets in to my more prog rock style. Four strings are more than enough for me – too much else to think about. I once did a gig playing someone's five-string bass with a skiffle group. It confused the hell out of me! My first bass was a short scale Jedson that my grandfather found in a skip, Telecaster style in white. It's cheap and functional, but my Epiphone SG EB3 is my always go-to bass, with flatwound strings. My bass heroes are Andy Fraser, Jack Bruce, Stanley Clarke, Mark King, and last but not least, the hero of my birth town, Martin Turner. The greatest bass player that ever lived is probably Eberhard Weber, I saw him do a solo gig in around 1991. That was also the first time I saw a looper: just about every album I have that he plays on is fantastic. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose the Move's *Looking In*. The song 'Feel Too Good' has a monster bass and drum riff at the start and the bass sound is massive.

www.secretsforseptember.co.uk

© Fabian Azul

GEAR

BASSES Duesenberg Star Player, Duesenberg D-Bass, Fender Jazz, SX Jazz, Antoniotsai P-Bass
EFFECTS Carl Martin Kick Booster, Digitech Synth Wah Bass, Digitech Bass Chorus, Yamaha Magic Stomp
AMPS Ashdown and Trace Elliott

LUIS MAYOL VARGAS BLUES BAND

My bass style is basically that of classic rock and blues, although I add chords, harmonics, octaves alternating with picks and fingers, always doing my best for each song. I am a self-made musician who started playing Spanish guitar and electric guitar and did so for years, until one day a good friend who played bass asked me to replace him for a whole summer in Ibiza. Since then, the bass has become my instrument. I generally use four-string bass although I have a five-string Duesenberg bass, which I used to record all tracks on the Vargas Blues Band album *From The Dark*. I frequently take it along on tour because some songs ask for that. I think that the secret of playing bass well is, on the one hand, to play the drums and percussion even if you don't do it perfectly. This gives you a broader vision and an understanding of what's going on really quickly. On the other hand, and at least for me, it's important to dance because it gives you a feel of the beat of a song. But the main thing is to work conscientiously and meticulously with your instrument, and enjoy doing it. The greatest bass player that ever lived is Jaco Pastorius. In the summer of 1979, in Barcelona, I had my epiphany. One night, Jeff Beck played with Stanley Clarke and Jaco with Weather Report. I left the concert a different person, with the vision of how a bass should sound.

> "ONE DAY A GOOD FRIEND WHO PLAYED BASS ASKED ME TO REPLACE HIM FOR A WHOLE SUMMER IN IBIZA"

www.vargasblues.com

GEAR

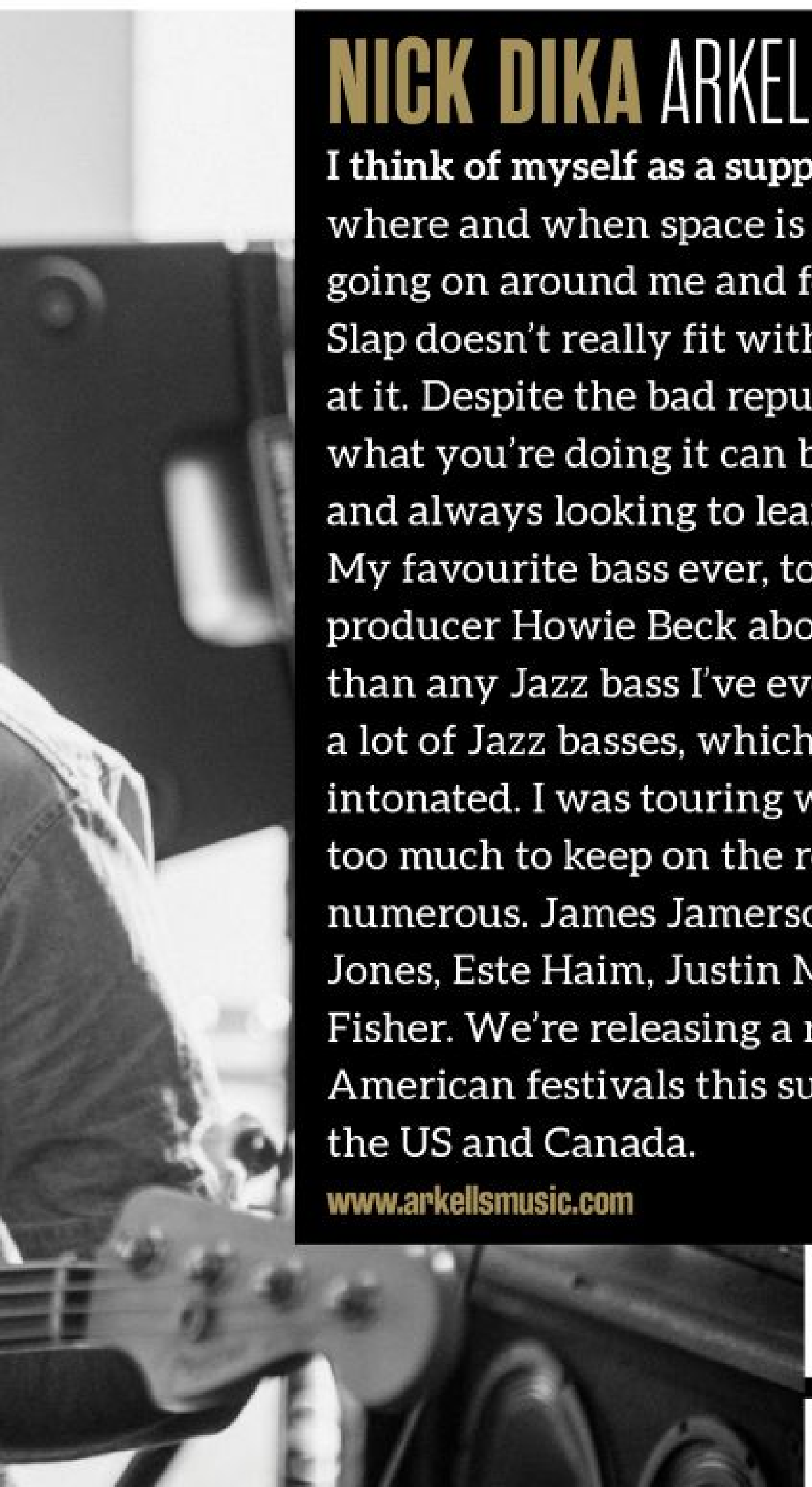
BASSES Fender Jazz
EFFECTS Boss OC-3 Super Octave, Electro Harmonix Bass Metaphors, Klark Teknik DN100 DI
AMPS Traynor YBA-300 head, Ampeg cabs, Ampeg SVT Classic head

GEAR
BASSES Rickenbacker 4001, Fender Jazzmaster
EFFECTS MXR Microamp, EHX Big Muff
AMPS Orange AD200, Orange 8x10 cabinet

TRULS MÖRCK, GRAVEYARD

My bass style is somewhat aggressive and driven in tone, more controlled and spaced rhythmically, I hope. I'm always trying to put vocals and melodies in a good place. I find four strings just about enough. The way I like my sound, the G string sometimes is too bright already. That's good sometimes though, being a bit like a third guitar following the other guys' leads. Also, I think a certain amount of limitation is good for you. Too many possibilities tend to hold back creativity, at least for me. For me, doing time in the studio really helps. To be able to try different stuff and listen back to it immediately to see what you can do to the big picture of a mix with really small changes. Playing bass is exhausting for your hands and fingers, so touring and playing a lot in general, building the needed muscles and thick skin helps too. I'm currently playing a 1974 Rickenbacker 4001: a very loud and pissed-off-sounding thing. It used to be in a punk band, and who knows how many other people played it through the years before I was even born. It looks like it's been through some hard times. Still, it's quite easy to get along with and has a good sense of humour. I've listened a lot to Phil Lesh from the Grateful Dead. His playing is very far from what I'm doing now, but still an inspiration. Robbie Shakespeare of Sly & Robbie is a super steady Jamaican bass player featured on countless albums. The stuff he did with the Upsetters and on the King Tubby albums are just great. Dickie Peterson of Blue Cheer for his volume and lack of control. And Charles Mingus. Such a great guy. The musical worlds and stuff he built around his playing is amazing. Listen to the *Black Saint* album. Top 10 of all time. *Mingus Dynasty* is also fantastic. For some reason, I always thought Jack Casady's sound on the Woodstock album (or was it the film?) is one of the best bass sounds ever recorded. It's very deep but still drive-y and clear. That's a sound that can carry a weight on its shoulders without losing grip or pace. I believe he was playing a hollowbody through a Fender amp. Our new album, *Innocence & Decadence*, is out now.

@graveyardmusic



NICK DIKA ARKELLS

I think of myself as a supportive player. I play in a five-piece rock band, so being aware of where and when space is available is important. I try to be musically sensitive to what is going on around me and focus on playing parts and lines that serve the song as a whole. Slap doesn't really fit with the kind of music that I'm playing. I would love to get better at it. Despite the bad reputation slapping gets in some circles, I think if it does work with what you're doing it can be cool. Listening to what's going on around you, practising and always looking to learn and try things outside of your comfort zone is important. My favourite bass ever, to date, is a 1980s Japanese Fender Jazz I bought from Toronto producer Howie Beck about six years ago. The neck is thicker and the body is heavier than any Jazz bass I've ever played. It gives the bass a rounder and warmer sound than a lot of Jazz basses, which in turn, gives you a bit more versatility. It's almost perfectly intonated. I was touring with it for a couple years, but I started to realise that I loved it too much to keep on the road. Now I use it exclusively for recording. My bass heroes are numerous. James Jamerson, Paul McCartney, Tina Weymouth, Thundercat, John Paul Jones, Este Haim, Justin Meldal-Johnsen, Rob Pope, Nick O'Malley, Roger Lima, Norwood Fisher. We're releasing a record in August called *Morning Report* and playing some North American festivals this summer in support. We will be on the road this fall and winter in the US and Canada.

www.arkellsmusic.com

GEAR
BASSES Steve Harris Fender Precision bass with Steve Harris Seymour Duncan SPB-4 pickups, Ernie Ball strings
EFFECTS SansAmp
AMPS Ashdown MAG 300 head, Ashdown 4x12 cab

KARL SCHRAMM BLAZE BAYLEY, ABSOLVA

Being an Iron Maiden fan I've been hugely influenced by Steve Harris, which I think can be seen in my technique. I'm a fingerstyle player and only use two fingers on my picking hand, but also use them to strum chords when necessary. I played a five-string bass in my old bands and love the added benefit you get for heavier parts of the metal genre, but with Blaze and Absolva it simply isn't needed. Our sound is heavily influenced by metal bands from the 80s and a four-string bass is synonymous with the bands of that era. When I was younger, none of the music I listened to featured slap bass, so I never learned to play slap. When I was studying at BIMM Bristol I did learn about funk and slap players, which expanded my knowledge and gave me insight into different genres of music, which I found very interesting while learning about it. For the type of music I play, there isn't any need to slap, so I don't include it in the bass-lines I write. I learned to play by sticking Iron Maiden songs on and playing along, then listening to anything I wasn't sure about and correcting my mistakes as I repeated the songs. Eventually I put this same approach into practising scales and developing more parts of my playing. By really paying attention to each movement your hands make, and learning how to use the full range of your bass to your advantage, you can really develop your skills and go in directions you never expected. My favourite bass is the one I use with Blaze and Absolva, it's one I put together myself using various parts from eBay to recreate a Steve Harris Fender Precision (to be used in an Iron Maiden tribute band at the time). It has a beautiful maple neck and mirrored scratchplate, Badass Bass Bridge II and Steve Harris custom pickups. As I was in the middle of finding the parts for the bass, the pickups were released, and I went straight to my nearest guitar shop to order in a set, and after trying out one of the signature models of this particular bass I was 'copying', I really think that the pickups are the most significant difference in the sound. Remember that your heroes were just like you once, looking up to their heroes and dreaming that they could achieve the same. Absolva released our third studio album *Never A Good Day To Die* at the end of last year. As Blaze Bayley's band we've now recorded our first album with Blaze called *Infinite Entanglement*. At the moment I'm playing festivals with both bands and writing material for the future.

www.facebook.co.uk/karlschrammbass

SCHMIER DESTRUCTION

I play four-string basses. I am a bass player and not a guitarist! Lemmy or Steve Harris were fine with four strings too, right? And I don't slap. I play in a metal band and not in a funk band. I would fire my roadie if he slapped with my bass... hahaha! Lots of practice is important, and don't overplay your skills. Understand the song and leave some space for the live performance! Play only what you are good at. My first bass was a Tokai Precision in blue – not very pretty. I love my Flying V basses that Dean build for me. The power and looks are perfect. I also love my old custom Hoyer Destruction Special bass in the Randy Rhoads shape from the 80s. We all know the funny jokes about how dispensable bass players are, right? But all bass players have experienced this: stop playing bass at the rehearsal and you'll hear how thin the rest sounds without our fat low end. Gotcha! Our new record, *Under Attack*, is out now: the European tour with UK dates will follow in September and October.

www.destruction.de

GEAR
BASSES Dean
EFFECTS Ampeg SCR DI Scrambler preamp, Boss noise gate
AMPS Ampeg SVT

FUZZ

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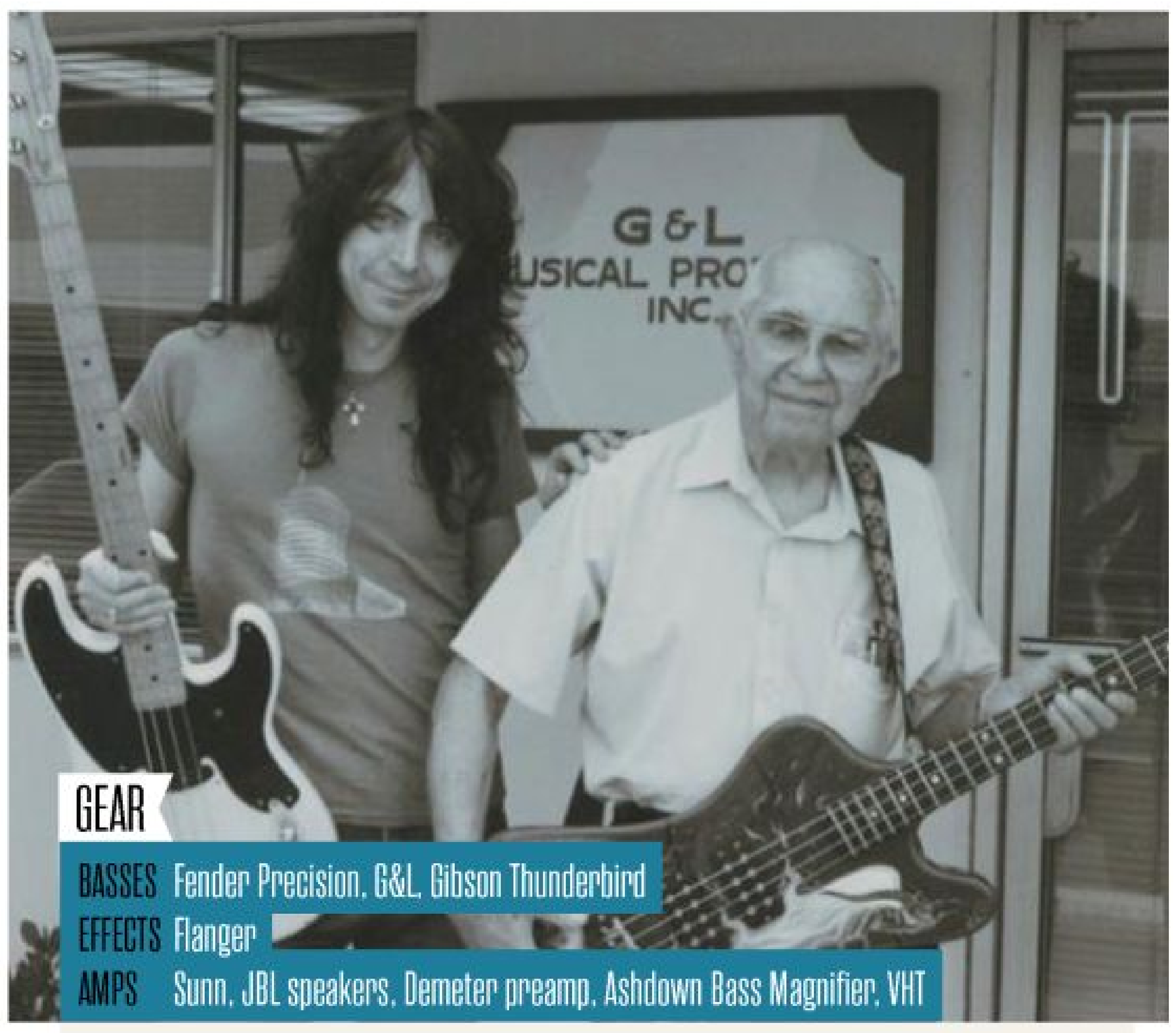
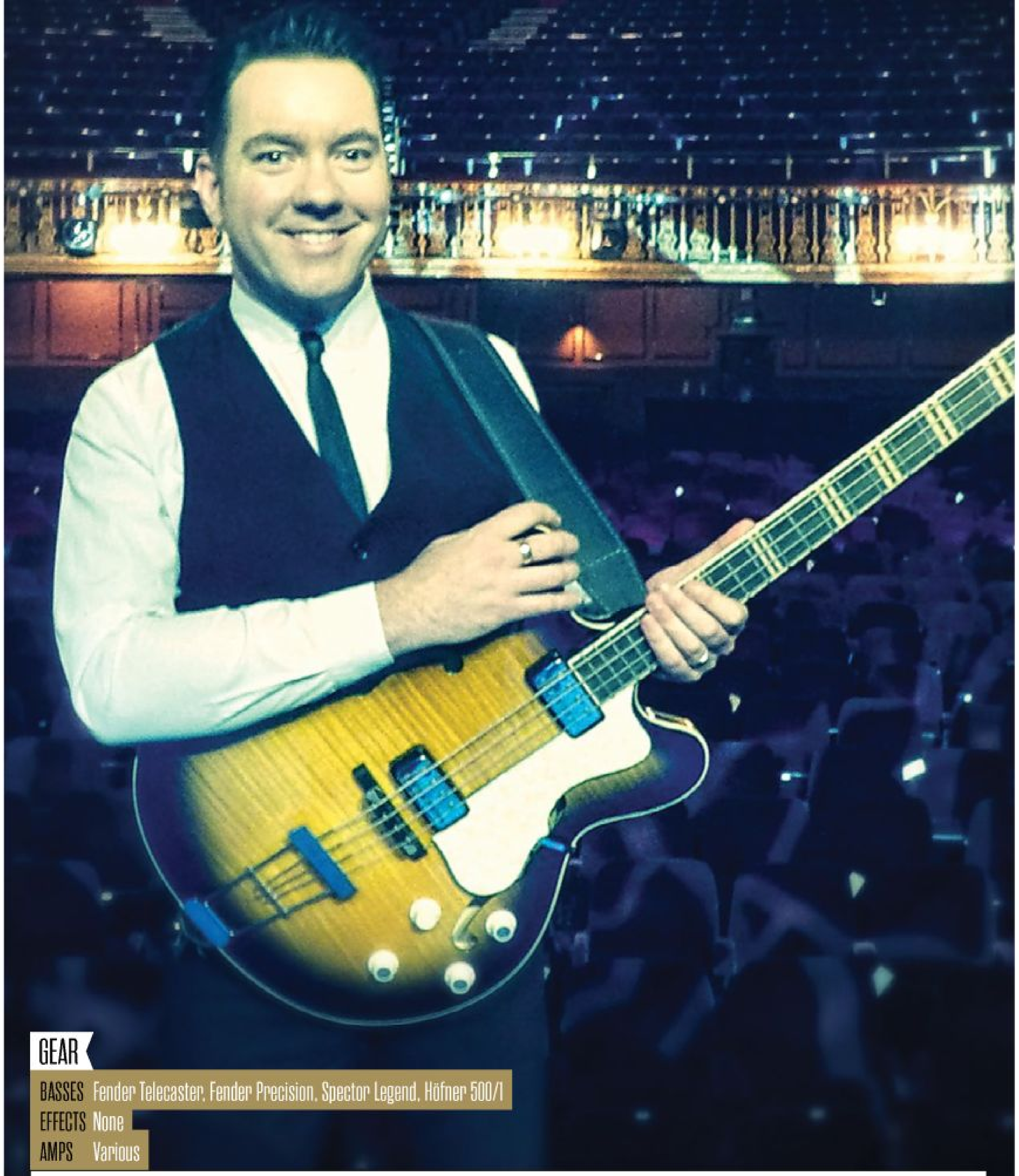


GEAR
BASSES Fender Precision, G&L, Gibson Thunderbird
EFFECTS Flanger
AMPS Sunn, JBL speakers, Demeter preamp, Ashdown Bass Magnifier, VHT

ALEX CAMPBELL

Play what makes the song groove. Bass lays the foundation of feel, so make your phrases and notes interesting, and play them like there's no tomorrow. My first bass was a Hagström four-string which was traded in along with an Ampeg BT15 fliptop which I still have. I bought them in the late 60s and sold the Hagström as part of a trade for another bass before moving to Japan. Later in life I regretted selling it: some 30 years later I saw one in the same colour on eBay and called the seller. Unbelievably, he was in the same town I sold mine in. I mentioned to him that I once had a similar one a long time ago, and that I'd traded it in for another bass when I worked at a music store. It turned out that the store I worked at folded, and he had bought a number of the instruments as part of a going-out-of-business sale. I bought the bass – and when it was delivered it still had the flatwound strings that were on it when I sold it. It was an unreal experience.

My favourite basses ever, to date, are custom G&Ls that Leo Fender gave me. It all depends on what you want out of life: for me, it's the love of music, contributing and being part of the development process. We all have something to say, be it in a song or a lick. Just make sure what you play counts; every note is important. For the past eight years I have been putting together a studio and writing and recording a series of soundtracks where I played all instruments. It's quite the learning experience. For the last year my long-time friend and guitar player from Hellion and WWIII, Chet Thompson, and I have been constantly writing and recording. It's been a rather long haul but we both feel the importance of making sure the songs have substance, as opposed to just throwing something out for the sake of it.



GEAR
BASSES Fender Telecaster, Fender Precision, Spector Legend, Höfner 500/1
EFFECTS None
AMPS Various

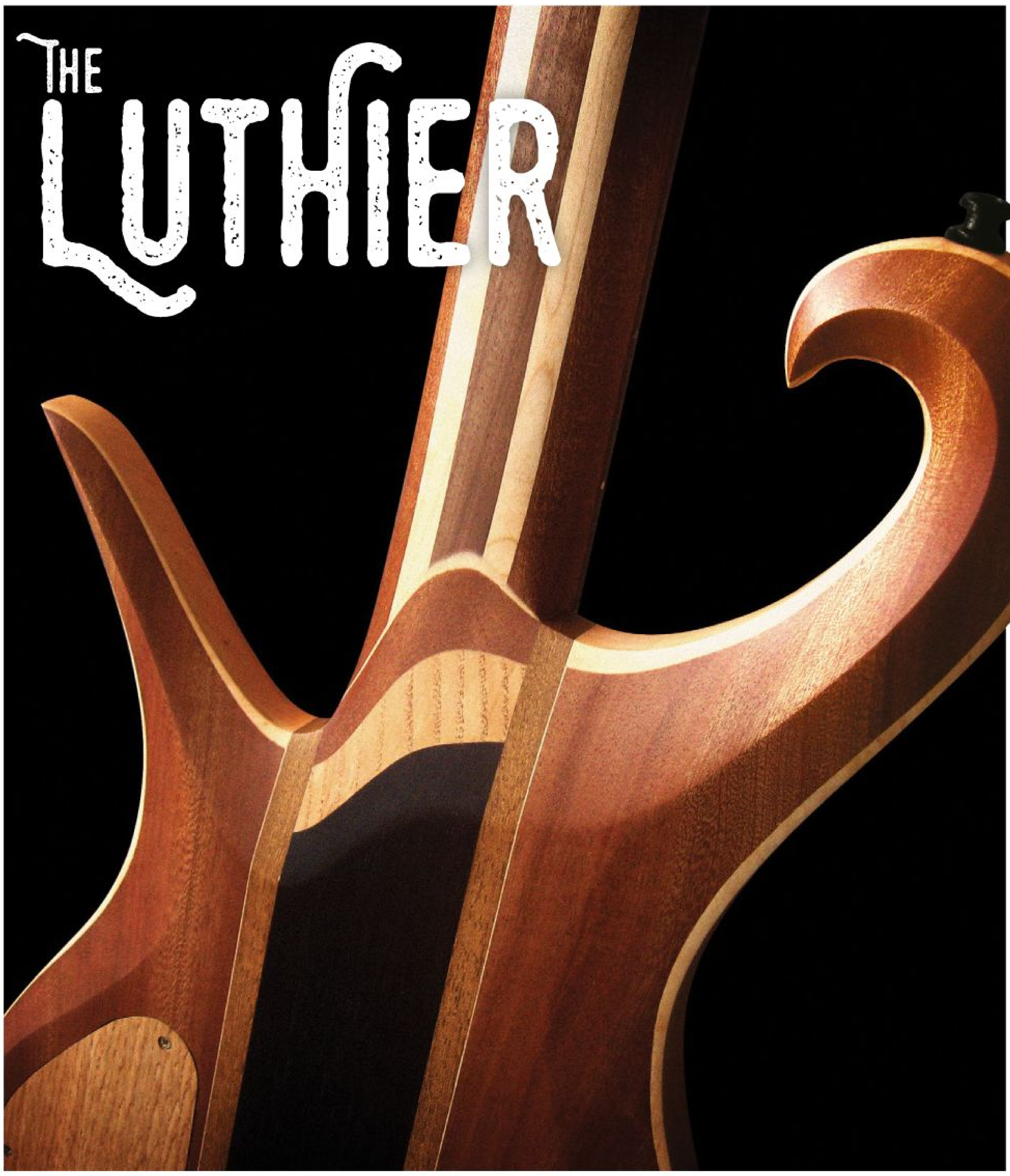
JARROD LOUGHLIN

I'm the bass player with the UK's longest-running touring rock'n'roll show, *That'll Be The Day*. The show is in its 30th anniversary year, performing over 220 shows every year to sell-out audiences – an achievement in these days of transitory fame and acts that vanish as quickly as they appear. I tour with 10 different basses including a double bass. Our current show starts with scenes set in 1955, which gives me a chance to wheel out the monster upright for a bit of authentic slap and twang. I have a wonderful Fender Modern Player Telecaster bass, a reissue of the one used by guys like JW Brown and Waylon Jennings when they toured with Jerry Lee Lewis and Buddy Holly in the 50s. Then comes a pair of Fender Deluxe Active P-Basses, one in red, which I use particularly for our Shadows section, and one in white, which takes care of any 80s songs. In between these are a Rickenbacker 4003 for the Magical Mystery period, and for the monochrome 60s I use a black Fender Cabronita Precision which is perfect when paired with our guitarist Ollie Gray's matching Fender Tele. A natural Fender modified 70s Jazz is next on the rack for the country and pop, and taking care of anything 'down in the basement' is a Spector Legend Custom 5 in bubinga, although this is actually only used on one song at the moment. I recently became an official Höfner endorsed player. It's amazing to be associated with the guitar that basically started rock'n'roll in this country. You can't mention the name Höfner without conjuring up images of Marty Wilde, Tommy Steele and of course that Liverpool band. The 500/1 Violin bass has got to be the most recognisable bass in the world and I'm happy to say that there's a lovely one sitting next to a Höfner Verythin in my collection. Those two basses are the 60s to me. As far as influences go, I stand with rest of the bass-playing world and cite Paul McCartney, Duck Dunn, James Jamerson and Carole Kaye among my favourites. I started out on bass in much the same way as McCartney – nobody else wanted to do it! I was a singer with a band and they suddenly found themselves without a bass player, so I got myself an old Yamaha from the shop I worked in and had two days to learn to play it. There's no secret to playing well. It's just practice and enthusiasm. You've got to love what you do. I used to put on a CD and learn all the guitar, bass or keyboard parts just so I could say 'yes' if anyone asked me to do it. Learning Billy Joel's greatest hits on the bass got me through a particularly boring four-month contract in Bahrain once. I love that bass sound. I learned it on a lovely Yamaha BBG5A flame top. It was my favourite bass. I can't remember why I sold it now...

> "OUR CURRENT SHOW STARTS WITH SCENES SET IN 1955, WHICH GIVES ME A CHANCE TO WHEEL OUT THE MONSTER UPRIGHT FOR A BIT OF AUTHENTIC SLAP AND TWANG"

www.thatllbetheday.com

The Luthier



Ace luthier Doug Mullen of Eve Guitars explores the fine art of neck building

The neck of a bass is the most vital part of the instrument. It's where we compose, phrase and express our frequencies, which are then transmitted to the rest of the instrument to create our unique sound. It's where the magic happens – therefore it's no surprise that the composition and design of the neck is where the instrument truly succeeds or fails. There is no component as important, even if everything else is perfect. If the neck is not correctly made or installed, everything else becomes utterly redundant.

Let's begin by considering the fundamental of neck design – the material. Good instruments begin by using great woods. Selecting not only the correct species, but the actual 'cut' of the wood, and how 'dry' the wood is can make a whole world of difference. The two most widely-used neck woods are maple and mahogany. With these two woods, there are several sub-species attributed to the general family, but there are many variants within these that can be used. Typically 'hard' or 'rock' maple is common, as is the sapele variant of the mahogany family. Both have long grain structure which makes them ideal for necks, and are very stable along their length. Of course, over the years, many other types of woods have been used for necks, including wenge, ash, walnut, padauk and many others in various laminated forms.

Next, we must consider is the 'cut' of the wood. There are two main types of cut that can be used either on their own, or more commonly laminated together – these are quarter- and flat-sawn. On an Eve bass, we exclusively use quarter-sawn cuts for their inherent strength due to their tight grain structure and stability along its length. This can be laminated with other types of wood to create three-ply, five-ply or more, depending on the neck design.

What is the advantage of multiple laminates? As it turns out, quarter-sawn wood isn't always readily available due to its availability within the tree and how it is sawn at the mill. A flat-sawn log yields more usable material as it simply cuts across the length of the log, whereas quarter-sawn takes more precision and experience to cut properly, by constantly changing the angle while cutting, and thus it is more expensive. Therefore, by laminating multiple cuts of material from different logs or species, you can create a very stable neck which is resistant to warping.

Flat-sawn necks tend to sound more mellow compared to quarter-sawn necks due to their comparable density, and they also have more movement up and down their structural length. Quarter-sawn necks are considerably stiffer, and are ideal for extra long-scale instruments and heavier string gauges, but they don't tend to be as pliable regarding truss rod adjustments compared to flat-sawn necks. As with most things musical, everything very much depends on what you prefer as an individual, as well as taking into account the structural mechanics of the materials used.

Next issue we'll look at the fingerboard and bolt-on necks compared to set necks, and neck-through designs.

info@evebass.com

Quartersawn cut (top) versus flatsawn cut (bottom)

Applied Improvisation with

Rockschool

Rockschool's Joe Hubbard brings you melodic ideas for minor pentatonic scales

Minor pentatonic scales are great vehicles for playing lines on the bass guitar fingerboard, but often are used only as three- or four-note sequence patterns played up and down the neck, which can seriously limit your options melodically. In order to explore some new sounds from the minor pentatonic, we're going to take a look at harmonising the scale with sus4 trichords, along with some major and minor triads.

Sus4 trichords are built as R-IV-V to their respective chords, and in the minor pentatonic scale we have three of them built from the root, the 4th and the b7th of the scale. In the key of C this gives us a Csus4, Fsus4 and Bbsus4. The remaining two chords harmonised from the minor pentatonic scale are Eb major from the b3rd, followed by C minor/G (Cmin in 2nd inversion) from the 5th (see **example 1**).

Learning to play these trichords and triads up and down the fingerboard gives us some great melodic patterns that differ from just running scale sequences up and down. Notice in **example 2** how the chords are being played up and down in root position. Take time to notice the instant melodic content derived from these voicings. Taking this a step further, in **example 3** we're going to learn this same group of trichords and triads in 1st inversion. Listen to how the lines sound and how learning the same chord patterns in 1st inversion add a whole new set of ideas to your vocabulary. Expanding this principle one more step, we end up playing the same group of chords in 2nd inversion in **example 4**. I cannot overstress the importance of taking the time to listen to the sounds that are produced here and committing this to memory while you are practising each exercise.

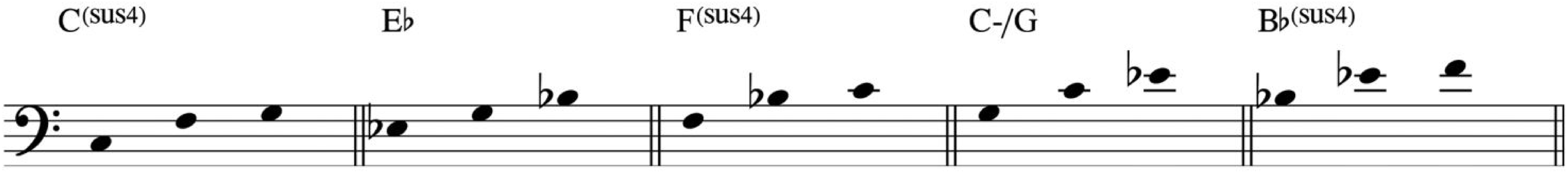
The minor pentatonic is a great scale to explore the use of quartal harmony. As you can see, sus4 chords (quartal based on the 4th) are easily derived from this scale and, combined with major and minor triads, can produce some very modern-sounding lines that take us away from the generic and predictable scale vocabulary that is often taught as technical development exercises.

Once you get a handle on this basic concept by practising the above exercises in every key, the combinations to which this can be applied are virtually unlimited, relating to both your bass-lines and solos.

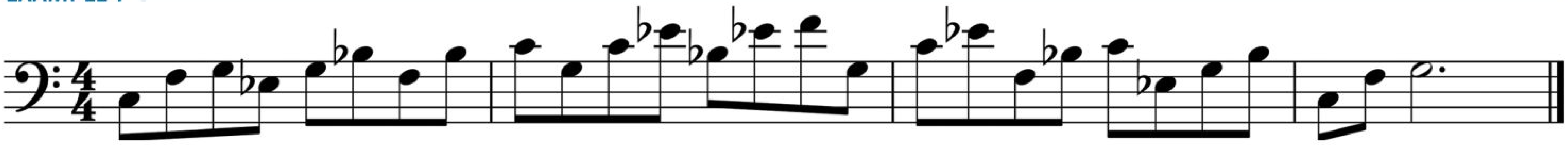
Now go practise!

> "LEARNING TO PLAY THESE TRICHORDS AND TRIADS UP AND DOWN THE FINGERBOARD GIVES US SOME GREAT MELODIC PATTERNS THAT DIFFER FROM JUST RUNNING SCALE SEQUENCES UP AND DOWN"

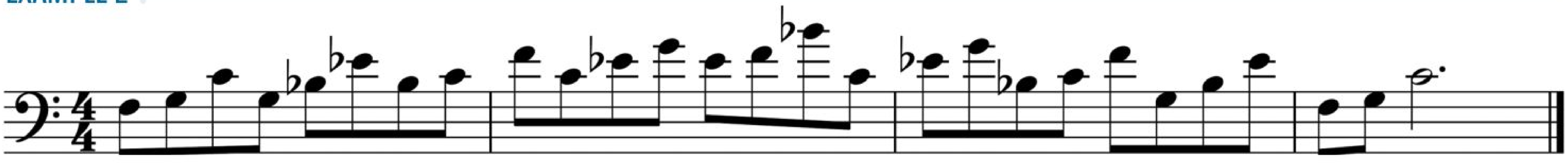
CHORDS



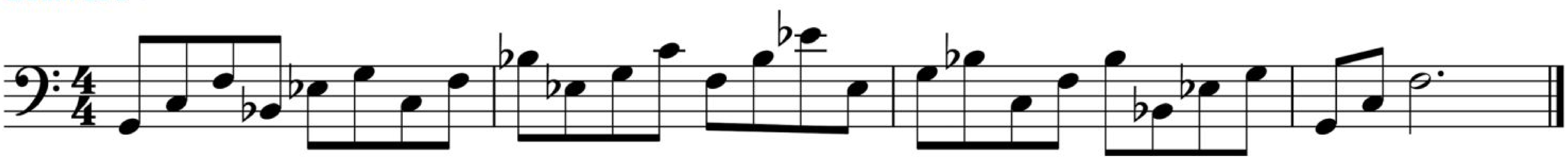
EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



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THE MU

You've got the gig, now what about the digs, ask the MU

The creative process can be a mystery, and starting a new project can feel daunting when ideas are elusive – but inspiration is always just a thought or feeling away. For composers and songwriters, it's all about learning how to channel that first little flicker into a unique piece of music, and seeing it through to the end. The trick is to keep the energy and momentum going throughout the journey.

First Flickers
When it comes to writing, anything can serve as inspiration: a feeling, a thought, nature, friends, lovers, children. Often, early influences are an on-going inspiration, something to revisit again and again. Major life changes such as relationship breakdowns have always given rise to material for music writing. Some artists look at other art forms for inspiration, like poetry, works of art, film or literature. Overheard remarks can also be an interesting source of new ideas. If you're still not feeling it, why not try meditation, journaling or free association techniques to open mental and emotional space for inspiration? Inspiration really can come from anywhere.

> "IMPROVISE WITH AS MANY DIFFERENT MUSICIANS AS POSSIBLE"

Play Around
Try composing on an instrument that you don't normally play. This will force you to think about the structure and melody of your music in a whole new way. A new environment could give you a boost, as could spending time with other creative people, especially other musicians whose creativity you admire or with whom you work well.

Improvise with as many different musicians as possible. Ultimately, improvising is all about risk-taking, and some people find this easier than others. Not only can you learn and be inspired by musicians around you, it can boost your confidence as well. If improvising is not in your skill set, it's never too late to try.

Reward Yourself
If you're energised and on fire with an idea, just keep working at it. Make up a reward system for yourself. For example, promise yourself a treat once you've finished the chorus. The reverse is also true: don't carry on if you're banging your head against a brick wall. If writing isn't working, take a break and do something physical: take a walk, ride a bike, swim. When you release physical tension your body relaxes and inspiration is more likely to come.

Create a Timeframe
Deadlines can also drive you, so make one up if you don't have one and stick to it. Focus on the piece of music in its completed form: feel how satisfied you will be when it is finished. Directing your mind to a particular goal can work well.

Still Feeling Stuck?
Put our advice to the test with an MU networking session, where you can connect with other musicians. Find the next event near you via theMU.org. Or why not try one of our free workshops or online courses with FEU Training? They are free for MU members. Register via feutraining.org.

BASSCHAT

'Bass player or musician?' asks Silvia Bluejay of Basschat

Despite its name, it turns out that Basschat is not overwhelmingly populated by bass players. We may be jokingly obsessed with the evil that guitarists do with their rampant egos, but many Basschatters are also guitarists, as well as players of a variety of other instruments. Judging by some recent discussion threads, the majority of posters see themselves first of all as musicians: only some of us exclusively play bass.

Those who replied to the question 'Is bass your priority?' appear to be roughly divided into three groups. The first comprises multi-instrumentalists who write songs and sometimes play bass for their bands, but just as often play guitar or keyboards or even drums. They joined Basschat because they love bass, but it's not necessarily their main instrument. Some, however, admit to only playing guitar because they couldn't find a guitarist they could tolerate being in a band with! If only we had four hands instead of two... This abundance of talent is all well and good, but one wise poster correctly notes that having more than one 'main' instrument has a drawback – it multiplies our Gear Acquisition Syndrome. We can't win, can we?

In the second group we have musicians who mainly play bass in their bands. Bass is the instrument they love most and the one they are most confident playing in public: however, guitars, keyboards and devilish electronic devices such as synths all have a place in their musical arsenal, either for composing or just for fun at home.

The third group comprises 'pure' bassists. They proudly only play bass, and if they compose songs, they'll boldly build them around the bass-line, regardless of genre. Some are in bands, while others choose not to play live, but never miss the opportunity to grab their bass and noodle for a few minutes – or indeed a few hours if possible. Which group do you most identify with? Join our discussion on the forum.

Another equally reflective thread has also been asking us whether we are 'bass players or band members?' In other words, how many of us play bass no matter what, and how many, instead, only do so when their band has a gig in the diary? Predictably, the replies show that, if bass isn't our main instrument, our band's needs usually take precedence, and the bass is only taken out of its case if a forthcoming gig requires it. More surprisingly, despite knowing that practising is A Good Thing, a sizeable percentage of bassists so enjoy the thrill of playing live that they only pick up their instrument when there is a gig coming. On the other hand, there are also those who play bass day in, day out, whether for the next gig or just for the sheer fun of it – very possibly the same people belonging to group three above.

Our community periodically also asks itself what made us pick up the bass in the first place: we are always curious to know what motivates others. Alongside those who list as inspiration their first bass-playing heroes in their favourite bands, it transpires that some Basschatters started on guitar or keyboards but were asked to move to bass on joining their first band, and then fell head over heels in love with the low end and never looked back. So much for just being the shy guy/girl in the dark corner!

www.basschat.co.uk

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DARK MATTERS

The Smiths weren't just another British band from the 80s: they shaped guitar music for an entire generation, propelled by the still-astounding bass parts of Andy Rourke. Back with Cranberries singer Dolores O'Riordan in a new band, D.A.R.K., Rourke reveals his bass philosophy to Joel McIver

Pictures: Jen Maler

I credit my brother Robin with introducing me to the Smiths, perhaps the 1980s' most significant force when it came to British guitar music. I was completely smitten. A lot of my acne-ridden teenage peers couldn't abide Morrissey's 'unique' vocals, but coupled with Johnny Marr's shimmering, layered guitar tracks, it couldn't be denied that the Smiths' songs sounded completely different to the cheesy synth-pop and thrash metal which I thought represented all that popular music had to offer.

As the songs wafted out of Robin's crappy hi-fi and into my ears, the bass parts stuck in my head and refused to go away. With the high mids dialled up to maximum and inventive fills thrown into what seemed like every bar, bassist Andy Rourke's staccato picking dexterity blew my stupid teenage mind. Not that I was thinking about the bass parts in even those slightly technical terms: all I knew was that those slinky, twangy lines sounded incredible.

The Smiths split after only four albums: devotees know the tracklisting of *The Smiths* (1984), *Meat Is Murder* (1985), *The Queen Is Dead* (1986) and *Strangeways, Here We Come* (1987) by heart. A generation of introspective kids mourned, and continue to mourn into their middle age, especially as the key players of Morrissey and Marr, prolific solo artists, show no sign of ever wanting to play together again.

Andy Rourke has spent the intervening decades playing with a long list of musicians, from Morrissey and Marr (separately) to Sinead O'Connor and beyond. He now has a new project with Dolores O'Riordan of the Cranberries and his colleague Oleg Koretsky. Called D.A.R.K. after a combination of their initials, the trio are releasing an album called *Science Agrees* next month. We've had a sneak preview and we have to say, it's great: we certainly encourage you to check it out without delay.

If you've read all my fanboy gushing so far, you can imagine that interviewing the guy almost 30 years after I first heard his music was quite the thrill. Read on for insights into the life and times of one of the bass community's finest...

Fender

"I prefer not to overthink the bass-lines. I just get stuck in there and go with my instincts. If I fuck up I'll do another take, but otherwise I'm not picky"

It's great to finally get you on our cover, Andy.
Well, thank you for giving it to me. It's my first ever cover!

D.A.R.K.'s new album sounds amazing. How did the project come about?
It came from my manager Melissa Aubert, Dolores' former manager, and our shared publishers at BMG, who told me that Dolores was looking for a new project. Me and Oleg Koretsky had been working on a project called Jetlag for several years, but we didn't really know what we were going to do with it. It was just there! So we sent it all off to Dolores, and she loved it, and gave us some really positive feedback. We went over to Canada, where she was living, and met her. She re-recorded the vocals, and we put live drums on it, because it had had drum machine parts before that. Finally we called our friend Rob Ritchie, our guitarist, in for his services. It was like a big jigsaw puzzle that we put together. We used commercial studios for the drums and the vocals, but the rest of it was done in Oleg's basement where he used to live in Brooklyn. We spent hours down there.

Did the bass go down smoothly?
Yes. I prefer not to overthink the bass-lines. I like to just get stuck in there and go with my instincts. If I fuck up I'll do another take, but otherwise I'm not that picky.

What basses are you using these days?
I've still got my old faithful – my 1964 P-Bass. It's all beaten up: about half the lacquer is missing from the body. I got it fixed up a month ago for a hundred bucks: it really needed it. Apparently the neck was all out of whack, and the intonation was wrong, and the electrics were fused and dodgy, but now it's in better shape than ever. The best hundred bucks I ever spent! I've also got a black Fender Jazz, which I use for rehearsals and so on. I don't like taking the old girl out too much because she's fragile. I'd be absolutely heartbroken if it got damaged – I don't know what I'd do without it.

Any endorsements you'd like to mention?
I don't actually have any endorsements. I should have, shouldn't I? They must be too shy to approach me, ha ha!

How did you get into bass?
I was always fascinated with musical instruments in general, as far back as I can remember. Every Christmas, and every time my birthday came round in January, I'd ask for a trumpet or a saxophone – obviously plastic ones. At Christmas when I was eight, I asked for a guitar, and my parents bought me a plastic one. I was getting tired of plastic instruments by this point, so I stamped my foot and demanded a real guitar, and in January they bought me a real one. My dad's secretary's daughter gave me some very basic guitar lessons and it went from there. I learned how to play along to the radio and my parents' records and stuff like that. I was obsessed.

When did you switch to bass?
Bass came along when I joined a band called the White Dice, which is a terrible name, with Johnny Marr. The bass player was Kevin Kennedy, later known as Curly Watts [a character in *Coronation Street*], and the only song he could play was 'Don't Believe A Word' by Thin Lizzy. After 20 rehearsals that became a little bit tiresome, so Johnny suggested that I try the bass. I was a bit offended at first, because I thought I was being demoted! But I tried it and I liked it, because it changed my whole way of thinking. Before that, I'd never consciously listened to a bass-line in any song, I'd just listened to songs as a whole. After that, I became obsessed with the bass.

Which bass players did you admire?
John Entwistle was a big influence, and McCartney, obviously. One of my unsung heroes is Bill Wyman: no-one ever mentions his bass-lines, but I think they were fantastic, and really funky as well.

What was your first bass?
A friend of Johnny's acquired an SD Curlee fretless, and because I had to learn on fretless, I became obsessed with Mick Karn, Japan's bass player. I'm still a great admirer of his work, God bless him. And Jaco Pastorius, obviously. It just kind of opened me up, melodically, and when I finally got a fretted bass three or four years later, I still played in the same style as the fretless bass. That's where the melodies in my bass-playing come from, originally, if that makes sense.

Andy Rourke. D.A.R.K.

That's odd, because your tone in the Smiths was nothing like the usual fretless bass sound.
Yes, my tone was the opposite, really. The nature of the music that we were playing in the Smiths meant that the sound needed a bit more of a kick. The tone of a fretless would have been too smooth. It wouldn't have gone with the music we were playing, so I had to switch it up. And because it's me, and every time I do something I do it big, I exaggerated the new tone and made it super-twangy.

When did you acquire the Precision?
The P-Bass came along on one of the first times we came to New York to do a gig at the Danceteria on New Year's Eve, 1983. We had just signed to Sire Records and [label co-founder] Seymour Stein invited us to go to Manny's Music on a shopping spree. Johnny chose a red Gretsch, and then Seymour said to me, 'What do you want?' I saw this sad-looking bass on the wall, and I saw that it was made the same year I was born, 1964. Even though it was all beaten up I told him I wanted that one. He couldn't believe it and said 'What? I'm trying to buy you a new guitar, and you want this?' I said [adopts *Little Britain* voice] 'Yeah, I want that one.' I fell in love with it.

What other basses did you play in the Smiths?
I had a Yamaha BB 3000, which is currently under my dad's bed in Manchester, and I've had many other basses over the years. I also had a Rickenbacker, the stereo one. I played that on a couple of Smiths records. I always took at least two basses out on tour with the Smiths because we used different tunings: one of them was tuned up a tone to F#, B, C, A because it worked better with Morrissey's vocal range. It made the strings like cheesewire – it was fucking painful! We also used a drop D tuning.

What about amps?
I used Trace Elliot back then. Nowadays I use a Marshall valve head, a big heavy beast from the 90s, and an 8x10 cab. I should get more familiar with the new small amps, but I've never really tried. I try not to carry the Marshall around, because it's heavy and I don't have any roadies any more. Technology's come along a lot since back in the day, and you can get away without an amp, or you can ask the venue to hire one for you. It's not ideal, though, so I'll take my own rig with me on the forthcoming D.A.R.K. tour rather than leaving it to chance. We'll have roadies then, so I can take whatever I like, ha ha!

You were only 19 when you recorded the first Smiths album in 1983, but you already had a very precise, melodic style. How come?
It was just my love of bass playing. I rehearsed a lot. If I wasn't eating or in the bath, I had a bass in my hand and I played it constantly.

'What Difference Does It Make?' is a high point of that album in bass terms.
Actually, there are two different versions of 'What Difference Does It Make?': the very early version is a lot more busy in the bass, with an almost rockabilly style. On the second version, when [the Smiths' second producer] John Porter got involved, he wasn't happy with the bass so I tried another approach. I like both versions, though.

> "Bass came along when I joined the White Dice, which is a terrible name,with Johnny Marr"

How did you hit on the trebly tone for the Smiths' bass parts?
The bass sound in the Smiths came about from me trying to overcompensate, because there was only me and Johnny Marr. Some of the later recordings have a million guitar overdubs, but in the early days it was just me and Johnny, both playing overtime to make the biggest sound possible. I used Rotosound roundwounds because I needed the twang.

Did you use any effects?
In the early days I had a Boss chorus pedal and a flanger. You can hear a bit of chorus on [1984 B-side and all-time classic song] 'How Soon Is Now?', although I'm not a big fan of the way the bass is produced on that song. It sounds a bit muddy to me. Personally I would like it to have been a bit more present.

Did you have autonomy over your bass parts in the Smiths, or were they collaborative?
Ninety-nine per cent of the time I had autonomy. Occasionally Johnny would give me a little nod about what he liked, but that was rare. All the bass parts are my babies, and you're not supposed to have favourites, are you? I'm proud of them all.

After the Smiths, what was next?
Directly after that I did Morrissey's second album and a bunch of singles and B-sides. That was a weird time, because me and Mike [Joyce, Smiths drummer] were his rhythm section and at the same time, Mike was suing him. I was subpoenaed to give evidence for Mike, so that was a difficult time.

Then you toured with Sinead O'Connor. What was that like?
Sinead was great. She'd recorded *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got* and was looking to put a live band together, so me and Mike got the call from her then-manager Fachtna O'Ceallaigh. She was living in Willesden in London at the time, so we went to meet her and then I toured with her for a year and a half. When we joined her band, it was the calm before the storm: the gigs got bigger and bigger until we were doing amphitheatres, and all the craziness started happening. It was intensive: I think we had one day off a week, and that was probably a travel day. Tourbuses, hotels, gigs... I just remember being exhausted by the end of it.

Did you play bass differently after the Smiths?
My playing definitely changed, because I was thrown into all these different situations. I felt as if I had to be more flexible. You can't just be a one-trick pony when you're playing with different artists. It was good discipline for me, and I'm sure it helped my bass playing. Then again, I played with the Pretenders and went back to basics, almost like the style I was playing with the Smiths. Chrissie Hynde was great to work with.

STILL CHARMING MAN

Dolores O'Riordan and Oleg Koretsky on Andy's best bass-lines

DOLORES My first Smiths albums were cassettes purchased in 1985 at Savins Music in Limerick. The music really stood out. The production wasn't full of gimmicks, and it's that songwriting and style of playing that influenced my work in the Cranberries. Andy's bass-line on D.A.R.K.'s 'Loosen The Noose' reminds me a bit of 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out'. He is a very melodic bassist, and it's work like that that made me want to collaborate with him. The bass on 'November Spawned A Monster' is deadly.

KORETSKY Growing up, we had rock radio and house/hip-hop mixtapes. My life changed when a friend loaned me his copy of [the Smiths' 1987 compilation album] *Louder Than Bombs*. I was 14 and the lyrics grabbed me immediately. As I was learning to play, I was fascinated with Andy's playing on 'Barbarism Begins At Home' and 'This Charming Man'. I found the bass-lines on 'This Night Has Opened My Eyes' and 'Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now' more interesting melodically than the vocals. They stand up on their own, which is unusual for bass.

Did you ever upgrade your bass gear in line with newer technology?
No. I just stayed with what I had, and still do to this day.

Ever been tempted to play a five-string?
Definitely not. Why do you need a five-string bass? It doesn't make sense. It doesn't sound like a bass. I tell you what, though – I'm about to order a Fender baritone bass, which is in between [a four- and five-string in range]. I can understand that. You can hear me playing a baritone bass on 'Vicar In A Tutu' – that twangy, Duane Eddy kind of style. But why you'd have a five-string bass, I have no idea.

Was slap bass your cup of tea?
I was really into it, yes. I listened to a lot of Stanley Clarke records, *School Days* in particular. He's amazing. Slap appeared here and there in the Smiths. 'Barbarism Begins At Home' is slap bass with a pick: I don't think Morrissey thought it was cool to do slap bass. But I bought Level 42's records and went to see them: I thought they were great. And I definitely admire Flea's playing, he's a really accomplished player. I also admire how he can jump around at the same time, because when I'm playing on stage I'm just focused on playing the bass. If I even tap my foot, I'll fuck up! I can't multitask like he can.

The list of sessions and gigs you've done has stacked up over the years.
It's adding up, yeah. My bass playing's definitely changed. Like me, it's become more mellow. If called for, I can go back to the old style, but I've gone back to playing with my fingers and using a more rounded sound.

> "Why do you need a five-string? It doesn't make sense"

How's your back holding up after lugging a Precision around for 30-plus years?
Not bad, actually, I can't complain. Maybe the bass has got woodworm, it seems lighter every year. When I pick up a new P-Bass it seems twice as heavy as mine.

The Freebass project, with you, Peter Hook and Mani from the Stone Roses, sounded promising when it was announced a decade ago, but it failed to materialise. How come?
I don't know. There was a clash of personalities and it was a strange time. Initially I quit, and then Mani quit. But I love those guys. They're my friends. We just couldn't work together, but we tried.

What do you do when not playing music?
I like to cook, but I'm not very good at it. I like to experiment, so I'll start making a pasta and sauce and my wife will taste it and say 'That's really good', but then half an hour later I've destroyed it by putting in too much pepper or salt. I never know when to stop. Apparently you have to be very disciplined to be a cook.

It's funny that you lack discipline in the kitchen, because your bass parts in the Smiths were very nuanced and precise.
Yeah, I don't know what came over me. It was effortless. I wish I could have those moments every day.

So is D.A.R.K. taking up all your time at the moment?
That's what I'm focused on. We're off on tour in the UK and Europe in September, and then hopefully we'll do some North American dates in the winter.

It's a while since you've played live, isn't it?
You know what, I've not played live for 10 years, apart from when I jumped on stage with Johnny a couple of years ago when he played in New York. We did 'How Soon Is Now'.

Do you think you'll ever record with him again?
Who knows? It'd be nice. We worked well together, that's for sure. I've known him since I was 11, after all...

Info: www.darkofficial.com, www.andyrourke.com. D.A.R.K.'s album *Science Agrees* is out shortly

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jensen transformers inside

DEAR JOHN

Jah Wobble, aka John Wardle, is a man with an immense musical CV, from PIL to Invaders Of The Heart and beyond. Back with a new album, he tells *BGM* how he got to this point

Pic by Alex Hurst

Our new album, *Everything Is No Thing*, is a natural, relaxed album that talks a lot about my influences over the years. Getting the producer Youth [aka Martin Glover, interviewed in *BGM* 132] involved was really smart – he was supposed to just do three tracks, but fortuitously for us, Killing Joke's American tour got postponed so he could do it all. It worked out really good.

We had a show in London a year or so ago and we just went and played. We'd hit a groove and then quickly say, 'Let's go from A to D at this point' and give the song some kind of shape, rather than just 20 minutes of organic groove. That way, we didn't have to listen back to two hours of jams. Youth took those and made the shape more compositional and cut them down into smaller, more digestible pieces and did the flute and sax overdubs. He's got a great engineer, a very musical guy called Michael Rendall.

I've known Youth for years, and I didn't know he'd produced as much as he has done, but I see now how he's been able to do that because aesthetically he really understands what certain records should be about. He knew that this album had an Afro-rock thing going on. He'd seen the band play the night before we went into the studio, and loved them and wanted to work with them.

I really didn't fancy producing this one from start to finish: I wanted to be the bass player and composer this time. I knew Youth would be a safe pair of hands, and he was. We talked about our favourite artists – Sun Ra, Miles Davis and funky, Fela Kuti-style Afrobeat. I've always listened to funk and soul since I was a kid, and I've got into jazz over the years, so my record shows that, and so does my band.

Youth told me that he's a bit of a fan of mine – it's really nice when people appreciate what you do. When you've got that to start with, you know you're not going to get 'Oh, I'm not sure about that style of bass playing' or 'That's a bit heavy, we need to lighten it up'. I know he likes the way I phrase the bass notes, so there won't be any of that. I'm a bald man, but I imagine it's a bit like going to a hairdresser that you trust, and you can fall asleep knowing that you won't wake up to a shock. At no point did I feel at all anxious, which has sometimes happened with certain producers and remixers and so on.

Ovation Magnums are my main basses. I do use a Yamaha BB as well, which does the job that a Fender P used to do for me. It's very exact, especially when you're playing higher up the fretboard. I did an album with Bill Sharpe of Shakatak a few years ago, and I used the BB purposely on that, because I wanted the high notes to be very clear.

Ovations are great: I use heavy-gauge nylon strings with metal running through them. The thought of using nylon strings would have been anathema to me a few years ago, but they're flatwound and perfect for dub. On the first few tracks there are some very fast runs, and you have to be careful that you keep the clarity there, but then you go to dub and it's that fully-rounded dub thing that the Ovation does so well. It's made of solid wood so there's a lot of impurities in the sound – overtones and subharmonics – which is what you really want, whereas with modern, lightweight basses there are no subharmonics. Sometimes that can be good, but the Ovation has a sound with great character that I like.

"I REALLY DIDN'T FANCY PRODUCING THIS ONE FROM START TO FINISH: I WANTED TO BE THE BASS PLAYER AND COMPOSER THIS TIME"

I've got two of them: they have very heavy bodies, so I have physio every two or three months. I don't have any huge problems, but you're standing there for two hours and it's a heavy old bass, twice as heavy as most basses. If you play a long show year in year out, you do feel it. When I put another bass on, I think 'This doesn't weigh a thing!'

We used Ashdown gear for the recordings. I sit in the control room so I can direct everybody through the headphones, and I've started using Barefaced cabs recently, which work really well for me. I have the big 400-watt Ashdown and the Barefaced cabs, and also an old Ampeg SVT-1, which has that pure bottom end. I use Boss effects, and on one of the new songs, 'Mandala', I used a flanger from my pedalboard. The bass-line is doubled up by a Moog, too.

You have to stay on top of the Ovations all the time. They're from 1972 or thereabouts, so I have a guy called Mark Hubbard who takes care of them. You've got to make sure that the action is still good, and you'll get crackly pots and sockets and so on. Eventually I suppose they'll need new pickups. I've got an old Ampeg bass from 1959 as well.

Life is good. You always want to do more and bigger gigs, but everything works. So I'm happy.

***Everything Is No Thing* is out soon. Info: www.pledgemusic.com/projects/jah-wobble-new-album**

FROM ESPERANZA TO EMILY

David Etheridge speaks to bass legend Esperanza Spalding about her musical approach – and her new musical concept

Esperanza Spalding is already a legend in jazz and bass worlds: Grammy winner for the best new artist 2011, Grammy awards for jazz albums, videos and best accompanying vocalist, the youngest member of the faculty at Berklee College of Music (aged only 20 at the time), and seemingly someone who can turn her bass-playing and vocal talents to just about any idiom in jazz. Plaudits from such fellow jazz heavyweights as Gary Burton, Pat Metheny and Wayne Shorter show the esteem in which she is held. Equally at home with laid-back Latin stylings, standards and complex fusion charts, in any group from small combos to big bands, she's a renaissance woman of the bass.

Her latest project is a departure from the type of material that she's known for, introducing a new part of her character: Emily, her middle name, as a kind of alter ego. Gone is the trademark Afro and smooth, laid back vocal delivery. Emily sports long dreadlocks, glasses, and a varied vocal style (on new album *Emily's D+Evolution*) that, to me, has more than a few echoes of Joni Mitchell, with its swoops and delayed vibrato. The playing is as peerless as ever, and the sound of her band is an innovative take on the power trio format.

With such a seemingly out-of-character approach, the new album might seem like a change in direction. Spalding views it differently. "I'm working for someone else. I'm working for Emily, so it's going to sound like what she has to say. I'm her medium for this philosophy, this being, to express itself. I wouldn't use the terminology of her as an 'alter ego', it's something that's happened to me, is happening to me, and I'm making room for her to do what she's gonna do. I don't know that she'll be a presence on other records, but I know she's here now, and I'll do my best to make her life compelling."

Spalding's instruments comprise a 7/8 scale double bass of unknown origin, an S1 Czech Ease travel bass (which she has now stopped using), a Fender Jaco fretless, a Godin A5 semi-acoustic five-string, and a Southpaw five-string. Some have fret markers, others not. For some fretless players, that can affect the user's playing. Spalding reveals her approach: "I have no idea about fret markings. I don't really think about the bass that much, except when I'm practising. When I am practising, I'm going for an intention: I want this sound. I've never played a bass with frets so I'm not thinking about it. I go for what I need.

"When I pick up an instrument and practise, it'll be something really specific, like how a player made a groove; let me get the sound of the beat. And while I'm practising that, I don't isolate it into rhythmic focus, intonation focus, technical focus. I try and practise it, and if it's not in tune, I practise it again. It's not about analysing it or writing it – I just do it, you know? You have to have a reason to play the instrument. For me, being technically proficient is not a reason to be a bass player. Usually I'll have a reason for playing the bass first, and then I find the technical stuff to back it up."

Is her approach instinctive? "No, it's not instinctive, it's potential. I don't think about the intervals or the frets or no frets, it's just the instrument that I came across, I'm using it to make the sound that I want to hear."

Is there much difference between her approach to double bass and bass guitar? "I don't know the difference. On upright I practise totally different approaches to fingering. Sometimes I'll try François Rabbath, or other different approaches, or like free form. Honestly, I don't think about it any more. Really, if I'm focusing on a particular passage as I'm studying it, I'm looking for a fingering that's the most fluid. Is it going to be fast, or do I want to finger it in a way that has some notes in it? Is it comfortable and part of the groove? But that usually gets worked out based on sound.

"With Gerald Cannon [of the Jazz Messengers, Elvin Jones], I was taking a lesson with him and asking him about the sound, and he said 'just think of the sound you want to get, and then go get it!' And so I was thinking about the fingering, and the sound I wanted to get, and how I want to feel it in my body: easeful. Then when I'm practising it slow, it'll lead to the results I want. It has to be a combo, a combo of a more Rabbath kind of sound, or a combo of a Franz Simandl kind of sound, or a free form 'who knows what the hell it is' purely illogical approach.

"I think the benefit of not being attached to any one style of fingering is that it can easily be modified. Your body is not so attached to the way of doing it so you can get on with a gig, and you hear someone doing

> "YOU HAVE TO HAVE A REASON TO PLAY THE INSTRUMENT. FOR ME, BEING TECHNICALLY PROFICIENT IS NOT A REASON TO BE A BASS PLAYER"

"WHEN I'M TALKING TO YOU, I HAVEN'T DECIDED HOW CLOSELY I'LL SPEAK IN GLOBAL TERMS, OR HOW LITERALLY I WILL ELUCIDATE MY IDEAS… THAT'S HOW I PLAY, TOO"

something different, it's open enough and not so structured so you can flow with it. That's important for me. I really want to make sure that my body is not an issue."

Does her choice of equipment affect her approach on instruments? "I don't know what strings are on the bass guitars. They came with the instrument! Of all the things that I need to spend time on, I have not made electric bass strings a priority. That's not to say that I won't, but so far, I just use what the bass has come strung up with. On the upright I've explored lots of different things, and no matter where I go, I keep coming back to Thomastik Superflexible. That's on the instrument that I play primarily. I use roundwounds on the Southpaw five-string, and flatwounds on the Fender. I like using the roundwounds – they have a little more grind and sound a little dirtier, it's got a little bite to it, and I like that. I've also been using Aguilar stuff and it's been cool so far. This Saturday I'm getting together with a friend of mine, a bass player, just to mess with gear. We're just going to play with amps and pedals and sound. Everything is set to change right now, but so far I've been using an SWR California Blonde or an Aguilar with the 410 cab."

Does she use chord substitutions or try to stretch the tonality on material? "What I hear in the moment: it depends. I don't think anybody nowadays just stays with the basics. I mean, studying the music for any extended period of time, you're going to be hearing beyond the 'basic' diatonic chord tones. Of course, when we're studying harmony, we're studying options, like you study vocabulary. When I'm talking to you, I haven't decided how closely or how far I'm going to speak in global terms, or how literally I will elucidate my ideas. You find the phrase, and you find the vocabulary, and the emotion at the end. That's how I play, too. I study, and if I'm working on a tune that has a particular harmony that's woven in an unfamiliar way, of course I'm going to look for options – how I can move from here to there, idiomatically. As long as the vocabulary allows me to say more things, better things, more interesting things, then I'm cool."

Spalding has cited Ron Carter and Dave Holland as influences for her melodic approach to bass lines. I ask her about other influences on her playing: "I like the melodic approach for bass-lines. My favourites are Paul Chambers, Miroslav Vitouš, Scott LaFaro, Charles Mingus for his sound and spirit – super crucial – but I don't pick out many bass players for soloing, as I figure that they weren't listening to bass players for soloing. What kind of things were they doing to expand their capacity? A friend of mine is a pianist who also plays bass, and I think that when he's soloing, he's accessing the pianistic vision of harmony and melody, because he can do that. For me, I don't play jazz piano in any real way so I use another thing: I tend to look at linear instruments like saxophones or trumpet to see how they outline those harmonic sounds."

Finally, has she considered six-string basses? "No. It's okay. It's very appealing, but I just know that I wouldn't have time to get good at it. There's other things that I want to put my time on. When I hear so many others playing six-string basses I just drool, and I'm amazed and I'm inspired and happy they did it; that they put in the time and are blazing that trail. It's not something that I want badly enough to go into. They can get into that, and I'm cool."

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SOUTHERN FUSION

Stanley Clarke/Billy Cobham bassist Christian Gálvez talks low-frequency philosophy

I'm currently in several beautiful projects with musicians from many parts of the world. After some years playing with Stanley Clarke and his band, I started travelling and meeting a lot of interesting people. These days I'm touring the world with Billy Cobham and I'm a member of Trace Elements with Paolo Di Sabatino and Dennis Chambers, South Strings with Luis Salinas, Frank Gambale Electric touring South America and Europe and several other ensembles. I'm also performing a Symphonic Concerto for Bass and Orchestra and with two solo projects, the Ensemble de Cámara Contemporaneo and The Chilean Project.

I define myself as an electric bass player who can play what any guitarist plays: I can change function at any time. I love traditional bass, in other words playing groove and rhythm, but I also focus on sound experimentation, harmony and melody. I've worked for years on jazz chord melody, which is a technique reserved for guitar players. I play a six-string bass because it allows me to play several functions smoothly – the groove, the chords and the melody, and sometimes all at once.

My first serious bass was a Fender Precision: a gift from my parents when I was nine years old. My favourite bass is the one I'm using now, an AYS (www.aysbass.com) built by the great Chilean luthier José Ananias. He has been building basses for me for more than 20 years, and he astonishes me every time more and more. I use flatwound strings and I use the nails on my left hand as a pick. This is not compatible with the slap technique, as the sound of the flat strings has less attack and I know I'll break my nails every time I try. I also use Xotic effects and Markbass amps.

My bass heroes are Paul McCartney, Jaco and Stanley, of course, but many others have influenced my playing, such as Jack Bruce, Jeff Berlin, Ralph Armstrong, Dominique di Piazza, Gary Willis, Jimmy Johnson, Ron Carter, Ray Brown and Israel 'Cachao' Lòpez. I also like a lot of young guys such as Dave Carpenter, Hadrien Feraud and Matt Garrison.

Patience is important, not only for bass but any discipline for which you want to reach a high performance level. Anybody who wants to perform at such level spends hours of study and loneliness! This is art, one of the purest expressions of the human being. I always read critics telling artists what to do, and how to play, saying 'Too many notes!', 'Too few notes!' and so on. Well, I'd like to invite this huge mass of minds to close themselves in a room with an instrument, without sleeping and barely making a living for 15 years. After doing this they will realise the true value of an artist to society.

The most important thing I can say to younger generations is: try always to do what you think is right. Don't accept criticism from someone who has never tried to make a living with his own art. Follow your teacher if you have one, and if you don't, follow your inner teacher – your intuition!

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ALTERED STATE OF MIND

Bass guru Cass Lewis of Skunk Anansie finds ways to break the mould of conventional playing.

Interview: Hywel Davies

"I don't know how or where they come from... I just keep coming up with all these stories, ha ha!" That pretty much sums up our little conversation with bass aficionado Richard 'Cass' Lewis of alternative rockers Skunk Anansie.

After major success in the mid 1990s, Lewis and the rest of Skunk Anansie – singer Deborah 'Skin' Dyer, guitarist Martin 'Ace' Kent and drummer Mark Richardson – took time out before reforming in 2010. They've recently released a new studio album, *Anarchytecture*. As *BGM* strolls down memory lane asking where it all began for Lewis, we uncover gems from the bassist's past that he's enthusiastic to share...

"This is something I haven't spoken about in a long time," Lewis reminisces. "When I was growing up, me and my group of friends would all listen to and enjoy music. Only a few of them took up music, my best friend Scott being one. He took up the bass and I used to come around, sit down and pick up that bass all the time. And then one day he joined a band, and the next thing he was touring all over the world and I thought... 'I could do that!'"

He continues: "I used to play drums, actually, but I didn't know anywhere to practise, so I ended up being a bass player. My influences were Sly & The Family Stone and Grand Central Station: Larry Graham was the father of slap bass. Bootsy Collins from Parliament, he was another of my influences, as well as Doug Wimbish. I love Doug, I think he's a fantastic player and a beautiful soul."

Asked about his friendship with *BGM* alumnus Doug, Lewis explains: "We talked about doing work together before, maybe doing an album or something. I found him to be totally inspiring as a player. He told me when he first started playing professionally he got a job replacing this other bassist in a band who turned out to be quite unreliable. Then one day the old bass player turned up at a gig looking for his old job back. Doug had to sit that one out. Afterwards, he went up to him to say hello, but the guy was really dismissive. Doug's view is that if anyone asks him about playing bass or is interested in what he does, he always has time for them. He lives like that: he's a really cool guy."

Lewis's playing style has been seriously acclaimed over the years, and for good reason. Listen to Skunk Anansie's 'Little Baby Swastikkka' and 'Twisted (Everyday Hurts)' and you'll soon get the picture. With his style comprising spontaneous slaps, satisfying scale runs and colourful arrangements, what goes through Lewis's mind when he lays down these expressive lines?

"You know what, I really wish I had an answer for that one, but I have no idea," he laughs modestly. "I could say it's because I'm such a genius, ha ha! The only really important thing, as far as I'm concerned playing bass, is to be a conduit and to communicate the emotion, not just playing the notes and the numbers. You need that emotional content in there, so it's not about technique or about how many notes you play, it's actually about playing it with some feeling. When I started playing bass, it wasn't like it is today. You can go to college now and immerse yourself in learning an instrument, whereas for me, back in the day, you picked up a bass and you taught yourself."

When the conversation turns to the basses themselves, Lewis makes it very clear that there is only one make for him. "My favourite four-stringed instruments have always been Music Man: they've got such a unique sound. Music Man have always felt like high quality instruments to me. I play a lot of different basses because I do like different sounds but as far as the number one, premier, numéro uno baby, it's my Music Man Cutlass. Nothing comes close."

That said, other basses have caught Lewis's eye over the years, he says. "Two years ago when I was in Ireland, I walked past a guitar shop and popped in just to have a look. I saw a Fender Jaguar bass and I was like, 'Oh that's interesting!' I asked if I could take it off the wall and I played it for about 15 minutes in the shop – and I had to part ways with my hard-earned cash for retail price, I loved it! I've used it on the new album: it's a beautiful-sounding guitar."

He adds: "The funny thing is, it's loaded with imperfections. It's an active bass but Fender has done something wrong somewhere along the line, because it has the loudest earth buzz you can hear. You can hear it anywhere on the planet, it's so noisy. We used to call it 'War' because it sounds like the end of the world as far as basses go. They've actually discontinued it. Mine has two Jazz pickups, and now they make them with a Precision pickup in the front and the Jazz pickup in the back, but even so, the sound on mine is absolutely stunning. When we were working on the new album, I used this bass to do most of the writing: I found it very inspiring to play."

What amps has he used over the years? "I swear by valve amps, I'm not interested in transistors. A valve sound on a bass is absolutely necessary, especially for live because you don't get that size or that girth from a transistor amp. On *Anarchytecture* I used an Ampeg stack that belonged to RAK Studios in St John's Wood, which as it turns out was actually the first studio I recorded in.

"I remember the first album I ever worked on. I recorded it there and I used their in-house Ampeg Portaflex. All I remember about it was how wonderful it sounded, so when we went back to record this album, I said 'Do you still have that Portaflex?' Sure enough, 31 years later, there it was, but as soon as I plugged it in, I was just like 'Nah, doesn't sound good enough'. Then they wheeled out the big 8x10 Ampeg combo with an external speaker option, so I used that – and it was amazing."

"AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED PLAYING BASS IS TO BE A CONDUIT AND TO COMMUNICATE THE EMOTION, NOT JUST PLAYING THE NOTES AND THE NUMBERS"

Has he evolved as a bass player, we ask? "I think over the past 20 years my bass playing has progressed more in service to the song," he replies. "I decided a long time ago I didn't want to be the best, because I find the headspace when you're practising all the time doesn't really service the song for me. You have so many trained musicians, all taught in the same school, all with the same syllabus, and it lacks something. I understand, of course, that if you get educated in something, your potential to be a great player is much better, but I also think there's something passionless and soulless about that. I love bands that have soul, passion and really communicate emotion. We try to tell it like it is: we try not to pull our punches. Always play music with the people you love – because then you can stay together forever."

www.skunkanansie.net

ROAD DOG

Winery Dogs bassist and living legend Billy Sheehan catches up with Mike Brooks

Billy Sheehan recently passed through the UK on the Winery Dogs' European tour in support of their latest album, *Hot Streak*, so we caught up with the bass god prior to their London show in Kentish Town. "We've been on the road and played over 100 shows now – and that's a true test of everything as a band," he says. "But gear is gear, and last night in Luxembourg, my bass pedals stopped. I couldn't get the attention of the tech and when I finally did, we were in the bridge and I carried on playing the verse! It was only my second day using a whole new set-up, but I ruined the song... sorry, guys!"

In conjunction with EBS, Sheehan launched the latest incarnation of his signature drive pedal at NAMM in January to much acclaim, as he explains. "The original pedal was a great success for EBS, and now we've modified it in several ways. It has a feature that I don't know of in any other pedal: the drive chip is swappable. I've got a bunch of old chips from the 70s and they all have a different character. EBS are going through a bunch of those old chips and they're going to produce a synopsis of what each chip sounds like. [I've also heard of bassists] putting a second distortion pedal in the drive chain to get some hotter gain, and plugging it up in ways I didn't know you could. It's a great way to let people experiment and pool their resources and ideas, and I can go back to EBS with new ideas. With the loops available, it's very modifiable: you can open it up and really tweak it with adjustable mids and compression – there's also a gain and a boost switch."

Track two on the new Dogs album, 'Captain Love', sounds like a tip of the hat to AC/DC, one of Sheehan's favourite bands. With a wry smile, he chuckles and gives us the lowdown when I ask him if the comparison was intentional. "No but yes! We didn't intend it like that but that's the way it came out. I'm a huge AC/DC fan, they're one of the greatest bands ever. *Back In Black* or *Highway To Hell* would be one of my desert island records. The songs have a groove that's unstoppable."

Some of you may be aware that history was very nearly made recently when the original line-up that recorded David Lee Roth's classic 1986 rock album *Eat 'Em And Smile*, including singer Roth himself, reconvened to play at the Lucky Star Jam Night in Los Angeles. Sheehan picks up the story: "...Now that was a trip! I had my bass ready to go, and I could hear all sorts of chaos going on. The venue was only allowed to have 600 or 700 people inside, and that night there was 1200 to 1300 in there, plus another 3000 outside, so the fire marshal was called. Greg Bissonette [drummer] and I chatted a few weeks before and said let's get Steve [Vai, guitarist] down, and maybe have Ralph [Saenz, aka Michael Starr] from Steel Panther sing. We put a call in to Dave, and he called Steve and said he'd do it.

"We got on great. I can't speak for anyone else, but we might try to do it again further down the line. I would love to. The Lucky Star Jam is a great format, a real phenomenon, they should export it elsewhere. They could probably do a great one here in London. You go up, you plug in and you play. No checks, no pedalboards and that's why it's great. Everyone gets the songs they're supposed to learn. I had to get up with Nuno Bettencourt from Extreme and play one of his songs called 'Gravity'. I'd never heard the song before, but I got up and played with him and we had a blast."

2016 has been a sad year with so many musical stars passing away, as was 2015, when among other great bassists, we lost the mighty Chris Squire. "It's horrible," muses Sheehan, "but we're at that age, because a huge bubble of talent happened in a short space of time. I was a huge Bowie fan, he's probably one of my biggest influences. That one hit everyone extra hard, and Lemmy too. He was such a figure in LA. There was a photo of him, me, Chris Squire and John Entwistle sitting in the Rainbow, hanging out and drinking and telling stories. They hung the photo on the wall and someone stole it! All three of them were such great fun to be around." To hear those stories, eh readers?

Info: www.thewinerydogs.com

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4 String Basses

15278 - Bass Collection Jive Bass Black n Blocks
13994 - Bass Collection Portrait Fretless Bass
15510 - Bass Collection Rhythm Stick, Sunburst
10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag
13805 - Cort Action Deluxe, Faded Grey Burst
12314 - Cort GB4 Custom Spalted Maple Top
12807 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 4 String Bass
15242 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 5 String Bass
14402 - Danelectro DL58 Longhorn Bass, Black
15174 - Danelectro DL58 Longhorn Bass, Copper B.

Fender

14607 - Fender 64 Closet Classic J, Sburst, Used
14925 - Fender Am. Dlx Jazz Bass, White Blonde
14643 - Fender Am Dlx Dimension Bass IV Cayenne
14582 - Fender American Std Jazz Bass, O. White
15354 - Fender American Vintage '74 Jazz Bass
15207 - Fender Classic Special 60's P Bass FSR
15536 - Fender Dlx Active Jazz Bass Surf Pearl
15529 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass IV, ACBurst
13694 - Fender FSR American Dlx Jazz Bass, Black
15417 - Fender Japan Classic 60s Jazz Bass Ocean
15377 - Fender Japan Classic 70s Jazz, Sunburst
15412 - Fender Jap. FSR Classic 70s P Bass White
12288 - Fender Mike Dirnt Road Worn Precision SB
12426 - Fender Standard Jazz Bass Brown Sunburst
12689 - G & L L1500 USA 4 String Bass, Sunburst
15266 - G & L Tribute Series M2000, Sunburst
12895 - G&L Tribute L2000 4 String Bass Guitar
12805 - G&L Tribute L2000 Lefty 4 String Bass
14362 - G2220 Junior Jet Bass II Black
12194 - Godin Shifter 4, Trans Black, Used
11189 - Hofner HCT Shorty Bass, Black
12188 - Hofner Ignition Violin Bass, Sunburst
14498 - Hofner Ignition Violin Bass, Sunburst
15381 - Lakland 4402 Deluxe Fretless Bass, Used
15096 - LE Marquis NY Violin Bass, Lefty, Used
9675 - Levin LB400 Bass Guitar, Blue
8073 - Lodestone Primal Artist
8081 - Lodestone Primal Pro in Chignal Blue

MARLEAUX

15409 - Marleaux Consat Custom 4 String Bass
15403 - Marleaux Sopran Short Scale 4 String
14167 - Marleaux Votan XS Deluxe, Black Burst
14946 - MusicMan Stingray 3EQ Black, Maple Neck

ORANGE

15107 - Orange O Bass, Off-Black
15106 - Orange O Bass Tear Drop Sunburst
15105 - Orange O Bass in Orange
14367 - PRS SE Kingfisher Bass, Natural
11197 - Spector Bass Performer 4, Red
13337 - Spector Coda Pro 4 Black Cherry Stain
14105 - Spector Legend Standard 4 Blue Stain
15370 - Squier Classic Vibe 50s P Bass, W.Blonde
4615 - Squier Vintage Modified Jazz 77, Black
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst
14613 - Vintage Icon VJ74 MRBK, Distressed Black
14490 - Vintage LV4BB Lefthanded 4 String, Black
14407 - Vintage LVJ74 Lefthanded Bass Guitar, Natural
14489 - Vintage VJ74MSSB Bass, Sunset Sunburst
15268 - Warwick Adam Clayton Solid Creme White

WestCoast

6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red

YAMAHA

14836 - Yamaha 2024 Bass, Sunburst, Secondhand
10120 - Yamaha BB1024X 4 String, Caramel Brown
4649 - Yamaha BB2024X, VSB Vintage Sunburst
6953 - Yamaha BB424X, Vintage White
5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
13927 - Yamaha TRBX174EW, Translucent Black
13926 - Yamaha TRBX174EW, Translucent Natural
13137 - Yamaha TRBX304 Bass In Mist Green
14935 - Yamaha TRBX504 Bass, Trans Black
14934 - Yamaha TRBX504 Bass, Trans Brown

5 String Basses

10109 - Cort A5 5 String Bass, Open Pore Natural
13657 - Cort A5 Custom SP 5, Spalted Maple
15363 - Cort A5 Ultra Artisan 5-String Bass, Nat
14312 - Cort Action V-DLX, Cherry Red Sunburst
15378 - Cort B5 Plus Artisan Series 5-String Bass
15361 - Cort C5 Plus Artisan Series 5 String
12538 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Open Pore Nat.
14639 - Fender American Deluxe Dimension V,
15360 - Fender American Deluxe Jazz Bass V Black
15281 - Fender American Deluxe Jazz Bass V, Nat
13117 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass V Natural
9702 - G&L Tribute L2500 5-String In Walnut
15265 - G&L Tribute L2500 5 String, Blueburst
15261 - Lakland 5501 5 String Bass, Black
15410 - Marleaux Consat Custom 5 String Bass
15407 - Marleaux Contra 5, Old Violin Finish
15408 - Marleaux Diva Fretless 5-String Bass
15406 - Marleaux MBass Custom 2012 5 String Bass
13875 - Kelly Dragonfly 5 Fretless Acoustic Bass
15383 - MusicMan Stingray 5 20th Anniv. Red Used
12198 - MusicMan Stingray 5 Honeyburst
10960 - Pedulla Rapture Fretted 5-String Bass
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black
15466 - Sadowsky Will Lee 5-String, Green, Used
0000 - Spector - 3 Models in Stock Now
15294 - Warwick RB Corvette 5,White High Polish
15295 - Warwick RB Streamer NT 4, Yellow Polish
15293 - Warwick Corvette $$ 5-String, Black
6448 - Westcoast JB5, Trans Amber
0000 - Yamaha - 5 Models in stock now

Acoustic Basses

15234 - Fender Kingman Bass SCE with Case
5393 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Black
5394 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Natural
5392 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
13875 - Kelly Dragonfly 5 Fretless Acoustic Bass
15117 - Takamine GB30CE Electro Acoustic
14263 - Takamine GB72CE Jumbo
15157 - Takamine GB72CE Jumbo Cutaway
13014 - Tanglewood TWRBE Travel Bass Guitar

Electric Upright Basses

4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
14482 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

Fretless Basses

15381 - Lakland 4402 Deluxe Fretless Bass, Used
15408 - Marleaux Diva Fretless 5-String Bass
13875 - Kelly Dragonfly 5 Fretless Acoustic Bass
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst

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Bass Combos

13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)

Ashdown Engineering

15188 - Ashdown AAA 120 15T 120w 1 x 15"
15190 - Ashdown AAA 30 8 30w 1 x 8" Combo
15187 - Ashdown AAA 300 210T 300w 2 x 10"
15189 - Ashdown AAA 60 10T 60w 1 x 10"
11192 - Ashdown ABM C115H Neo Evo 3 Bass
6459 - Ashdown ABM C210T-500 EVO 3 575W
15192 - Ashdown B-Social Bass Amp with B-tooth
8753 - Ashdown Five Fifteen Mini Rig 100
8750 - Ashdown Perfect Ten Bass Combo
15182 - Ashdown RM C112T 500 EVO 500w 1x12
15180 - Ashdown RMC115T 500 500w 1x15 Bass
15181 - Ashdown RMC210T500 EVO 500w 2x10"
5224 - Ashdown Tourbus 10 (10W, 1x6.5)
13905 - Blackstar ID Core BEAM Bluetooth Amp
13806 - Cort GE30 Bass Amp Combo
8988 - EA Euphonic Audio iAmp 350 Bass Head

EDEN

13705 - Eden D210XLT 8Ohms Bass Amp Combo
12430 - Eden EC10 50 Watts Bass Amp Combo
12432 - Eden EC15 180W Bass Amp Combo
12431 - Eden EC210 2 x 10 Bass Amp Combo
13375 - Eden EC28 Bass Amp Combo
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13704 - Eden EM275 Bass Amp Combo

Fender

12686 - Fender Bronco 40 Bass Amp
13497 - Fender Rumble 100 Bass Amp Combo
4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
13083 - Fender Rumble 40 Bass Amp Combo
15114 - Fender Rumble 500 Bass Amp Combo

Hartke

14093 - Hartke HD15 Bass Combo
14095 - Hartke HD150 Bass Combo
13773 - Hartke HD50 Bass Combo
9008 - Hartke HMH112C Bass Combo
9279 - Hartke Kickback 15 Bass Amp Combo

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin 300W
13279 - MarkBass Markacoustic AC601 Combo
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W,1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (300W,1x15W)
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

ORANGE

5234 - Orange Crush PiX 25BX (25W, 1x8)
5233 - Orange Crush PiX 50BXT (50W, 1x12)
15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

Roland

6320 - Roland CB100 (100W, 1x12)
4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w,1x12)
4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
4434 - Roland Cube 60XL (60W, 1x10)
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)
15433 - Vox Pathfinder 10 Bass

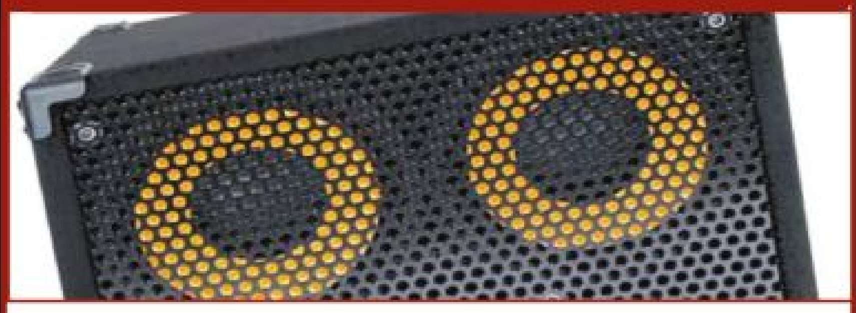
Bass Heads

15176 - Ashdown ABM1200-EVO IV 1200w Bass Head
14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
13641 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Head
15115 - ABM 600 EVO IV 600W Ashdown Bass Head
15177 - Ashdown ABM600RC EVO IV 600W Rack
13192 - Ashdown Five 15 BBH 220w Big Boy Head
10938 - Ashdown MIBASS 2.0 640w Small Bass Head
14171 - Ashdown RM220 Rootmaster Bass Amp Head
15179 - Ashdown RM500 EVO 500w Rootmaster Head
14531 - Ashdown RM800 Rootmaster Bass Amp Head
14553 - Ashdown Retroglide 800 Compact Bass Head
13200 - Eden E300 Bass Amplifier
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13414 - Eden WT800 Bass Amp Head
13198 - Eden WTX500 Bass Amp Head
15484 - Fender Bass Man 800
9349 - Hartke HA2500 Bass Head
9027 - Hartke Kilo 1000 Bass Head
12382 - Hartke LH1000 Bass Head

Mark bass

14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
7962 - Markbass TTE500 Randy Jackson Bass Head
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head
9725 - Markbass TTE801 Randy Jackson Bass Head
15109 - Orange 4 Stroke 300 Bass Amp
15110 - Orange 4 Stroke 500 Bass Amp
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head

Bass Cabinets



13640 - Aguilar SL112 Bass Cabinet

Ashdown Engineering

15191 - Ashdown AAA 115T 200w 1 x 15" Cabinet
5677 - Ashdown ABM810 (8x10)
6457 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15)
15178 - Ashdown ABM210H EVO IV 300w 2 x 10"
15460 - Ashdown ABM210H NEO
6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
15185 - Ashdown RM210T EVO 300w 2 x 10" Cabi
15183 - Ashdown RM 112T EVO 300w 1 x 12" Cab
15184 - Ashdown RM 115T EVO 300w 1 x 15" Cab
14172 - Ashdown RM210T Bass Cab
15186 - Ashdown RM 610T EVO 900w 6 x 10" Cab
14196 - Blackstar HT Metal 412A Extension Cab
13376 - Eden D410XST Bass Cab
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13197 - Eden EX112 Compact Bass Cab
13195 - Eden EX210 Bass Cab
13199 - Eden EX410 Bass Cabinet
13201 - Eden EX410SC Bass Cabinet
14254 - Hartke 210XL 2 x 10" Bass Cab

Mark bass

6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x 12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab
6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
14484 - Orange OBC210 Mini Compact Bass Cab
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)

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AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

Arch Enemy's towering bass player Sharlee D'Angelo has one of the most impressive CVs in the European metal scene. Amit Sharma meets the great man

Sharlee D'Angelo is a mountain of a man. As the 6'6" Arch Enemy bassist enters the designated interview room backstage at Kentish Town Forum, his shadow casts an all-consuming darkness that would leave anyone feeling like Martin Freeman in *The Hobbit*. But the Swede, dressed head-to-toe in black, is as friendly as can be, extending his hand with a warm smile. Tonight his band will be playing tracks off their latest album *War Eternal*, their first with new singer Alissa White-Gluz following the departure of Angela Gossow, who now focuses on managing the band. And while this is the closest thing D'Angelo has to a day job, the bass player also juggles duties in stoner metal mob Spiritual Beggars and AOR revivalists The Night Flight Orchestra. By his own admission, it's a life of constant creativity.

"When you have time off you do things with your friends, right?" grins D'Angelo. "But when all your friends are musicians, you're going to inevitably end up either drinking or playing music, probably both! So in a way, the bands outside of Arch Enemy are a musical vacation for my mind, I go somewhere else and explore other sides of my musicality that lay dormant. That's the way to do it! And doing different things like that help my approach in Arch Enemy, because I come back refreshed. It's like, if you only listen to Cannibal Corpse and form a band... it's gonna sound like Cannibal Corpse, you know?"

D'Angelo, born Charles Petter Andreason and later nicknamed after the soft Swedish pronunciation of Charlie, grew up just as the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal began infecting the world with heavy sounds, one arena at a time. Like many other Scandinavian metal musicians that were still in their teens, it was Kiss that converted him to the church of rock.

"*Destroyer* changed my life. Hearing those songs with that Bob Ezrin production, with loads of reverb and orchestration, it was like going on a journey or seeing a movie: everything was so super fantastic! That was when I really started dreaming about doing it myself. The first time I saw them back in 1980, they had a fairly unknown band called Iron Maiden opening for them. It wasn't a bad gig at all!"

And of all bass players, it was Kiss' blood-spitting, phallic-tongued demon that truly caught D'Angelo's attention. "Gene Simmons was a huge influence on me," he gushes. "I actually think he's a really underrated bassist. When people think of him, it's usually all the stupid comments and money, but even Paul Stanley says he's brilliant when he shuts up and plays!"

After switching between six- and four-strings as a teen, D'Angelo realised "it was more fun playing bass" and that "if everyone wanted to be a guitar player, then everyone would need a bass player." It didn't take long for him to get his break and cut his teeth playing bass for Danish legend King Diamond, just as the Swedish music scene became a hotbed for all manner of bloodthirsty, hellriffing metal bands. Soon he would find himself becoming the go-to guy for any bass needs. So what was it about his native country that led to an onslaught of world-beating heavy music?

"It's a fairly boring place, to be honest," laughs D'Angelo. "There's not as much of a scene as people think... more a group of individuals that knew if they wanted music, they had to do it themselves. People talk about Sweden's government-funded music programmes, but I've never really seen any of those. It's easy to get a rehearsal room, I guess!"

Soon he found a home in Arch Enemy, which eventually led to guitarist Michael Amott offering him a spot in his other band, Spiritual Beggars. More recently, D'Angelo has been living his 80s dad-rock dream with longtime friend and Soilwork frontman Björn Strid in The Night Flight Orchestra. Here's one bass player that doesn't believe in guilty pleasures...

"The older I get, the more AOR I like," he admits. "Some of it I liked when I was younger, but my tastes were more extreme back then. As you get older, you delve deeper into things and I've found loads of weird underground AOR bands. Björn texts me links to obscure tracks off unknown albums. We found we had a mutual love for American radio rock between '78 to '82...

"But we do branch out," laughs D'Angelo. "Sometimes we go back to '76 and sometimes even as far as '85! Playing with TNFO, there's a lot more freedom for me as a bassist. There's a track on the new album where instead of playing just root notes, I play lots of things in between, like John Entwistle in a way. It's adventure bass, going out on a wander and hardly finding its way back!"

"GENE SIMMONS WAS A HUGE INFLUENCE ON ME"

As for gear, the towering bassist has kept it simple over the years. Though he now plays his own signature Ibanez SDB model, it was originally Rickenbackers that he was seen playing on stages around the world.

"Rickenbackers are an acquired taste," he says. "Some people just hate them. It's an instrument that tends to have one sound and one sound only. So they're not very versatile, but you can't get that sound out of anything else. I have two old ones which I've just toured into the ground and had to retire. The necks had broken and been glued back on several times, headstocks coming off in planes... so then I started working with Ibanez. It's been 10 years now."

D'Angelo plugs his Ibanez bass into a Rat distortion pedal and tuner before the signal is sent into an Aguilar DB 751 head, driven through DB 810 cabs – which can run up to the maximum volume of an ear-bleeding 136 dB. It's a set-up he has stuck with for five years and sees no reason to change. As they say, if it ain't broke...

"It's a fairly modern amp but with an old school approach. It's not high tech, more like low tech. You plug in and it's dialled in already, maybe a little tweak here and there, but it's pretty much done. They're expensive, though definitely worth it. I'd recommend them to anyone."

Having graduated from the Gene Simmons school, D'Angelo favours a classic rhythm section approach. He's honest enough to say no one in the last two decades has directly influenced him, but only because he got all the inspiration he ever needed from the original legends of the late 70s and early 80s.

"It's the Peter Baltes [Accept] or Steve Dawson [ex-Saxon] take on metal. Or you could say the Cliff Williams [AC/DC] way of doing things. I stay in key and play more with drums than I do guitar, though I do follow riffs sometimes. I have a drummer's approach in a way and find myself throwing in lines to fit the drum fills as the songs evolve on tour."

Like any other broad-minded musician, it's not just rock and metal that has soundtracked D'Angelo's life. His favourite band of all time is Ultravox, specifically the period when Midge Ure fronted the band ("*Rage In Eden* is one of the best albums ever made") and he even cites *Jesus Christ Superstar* (yes, the musical) as a huge source of inspiration. Being open has let him understand the challenges presented to him as a musician.

"I focus on rhythm and harmony, which is especially important playing in a band with so much guitar and drums in the mix. You need to both complement and compete with it – which can be difficult. I'll try to ignore what's going on guitar-wise, I almost can't be bothered just doing the same as them. There's already two people playing that riff, so play something else!"

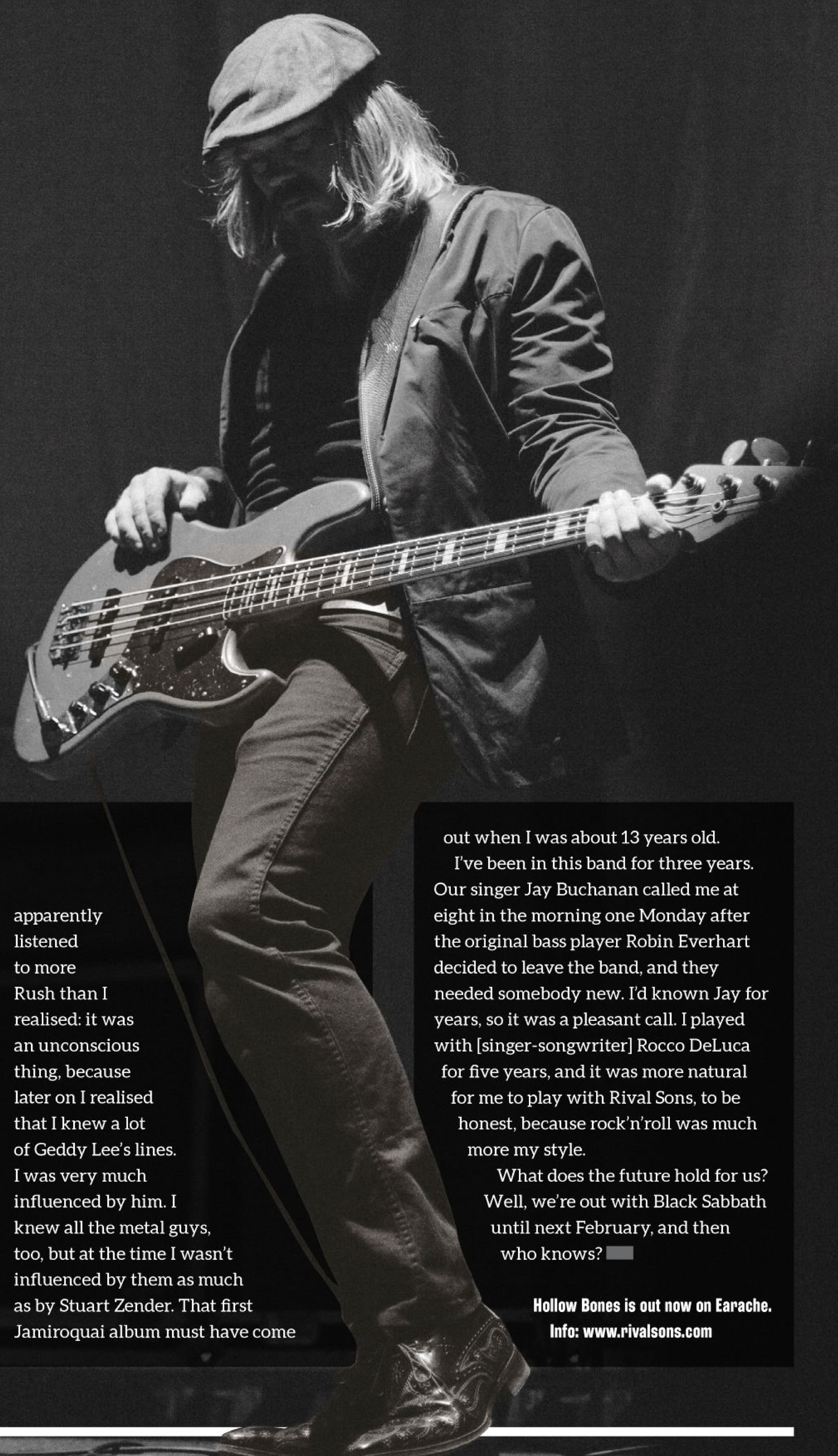
A knock on the door signals our time today is at an end. Last question: if D'Angelo could hand his 15-year-old self some key advice, what would it be?

"That's easy! It would be: 'Keep on doing what you're doing, you did fairly well! It's gonna be all right!'"

www.archenemy.net

SON ARISE

Rival Sons bassist Dave Beste reports from the road, where his band are supporting the mighty Black Sabbath



Our new album, *Hollow Bones*, went down smoothly: we did it in three weeks this time. We record a lot of stuff live, which saves a good chunk of time. I prefer to be a one-take guy, but if there's something I'm not loving, I'll go back and fix it. My lines are pretty organic because we track everything live. Someone will have a song idea and that's where the bass-lines come in. A lot of it is pretty spontaneous.

I use Ampeg SVTs and a variety of basses: I've been using a Yamaha BB a lot lately, they made me a custom model. They're making another one for me, which will not have the stock Yamaha pickups: I'm using a company called TV Jones. It'll be interesting to hear the difference between the two basses. Yamaha pickups are good, I'm just looking for something different. I have an old P-Bass too, which will always be there because you can't argue with it.

We're constantly on the road at the moment. I have four basses out with me: one in standard tuning, another a half-step down and then backups for both. That's more than enough. I'm 99 per cent a fingerstyle player: I have one song in the set where I play with a pick because it sounds better. Yes, I can slap. No, I don't do it!

I got into playing bass out of sheer necessity. My older brother was a musician and he was always in bands whose missing link was the bass player, so I used to sit outside their rehearsal room with an acoustic guitar and learn the bass-lines. I went in one day when I was about 12 and told them I could do all their bass parts: they looked at me like I was nuts, but I did it, and it got me into that band.

My first bass was a Cameo Jazz copy with a short scale: my stepdad gave it to me. Next was a Fender Precision Lyte: I saved my lunch money for a year and I bought a white one with gold hardware. I wish I still had it – I'd play it live.

It was Sting who originally made me want to play bass. The bass-line from 'Spirits In The Material World' made me look at bass in a whole different way. I apparently listened to more Rush than I realised: it was an unconscious thing, because later on I realised that I knew a lot of Geddy Lee's lines. I was very much influenced by him. I knew all the metal guys, too, but at the time I wasn't influenced by them as much as by Stuart Zender. That first Jamiroquai album must have come out when I was about 13 years old.

I've been in this band for three years. Our singer Jay Buchanan called me at eight in the morning one Monday after the original bass player Robin Everhart decided to leave the band, and they needed somebody new. I'd known Jay for years, so it was a pleasant call. I played with [singer-songwriter] Rocco DeLuca for five years, and it was more natural for me to play with Rival Sons, to be honest, because rock'n'roll was much more my style.

What does the future hold for us? Well, we're out with Black Sabbath until next February, and then who knows?

Hollow Bones is out now on Earache. Info: www.rivalsons.com

GEAR REVIEWS

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BASSICS BPA-1 Preamp

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass speakers and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's particularly useful for bassists, and we'll test recording equipment and general accessories every now and then as well, but generally speaking, this zone is for bass-specific gear.

We take the ratings that we give each item very seriously. *BGM* is the only print magazine devoted to bass in this country, and we have readers from all over the world, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your investigation, we'll say so; if it's flawed in some way, we won't hold back from making that clear. We're not beholden to advertisers in any way and our conclusions are entirely independent of the views of manufacturers, musicians and distributors.

When you read about a bass-related product here, you know you're getting a sensible, balanced review from an experienced bass tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality.

Right, that's enough from me. Remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*
Joel McIver, editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

LAKLAND
Skyline Jazz 44-60 5

No prizes for guessing what this Lakland Skyline model is based on... Mike Brooks checks if there's mileage in the vintage design

The Bass Gallery
www.thebassgallery.com

Where do all the Jazz Basses go? Most companies produce a variation on the well-worn theme and we, as customers, still buy them in droves. Love them or hate them, they are the most popular bass design without question. This offering from Lakland, as part of their Skyline range, has pinned its colours well and truly to the mast and they don't come more vintage-looking than this: simple, defined and classic to the extreme. This five-string variant is built to last – but does it imitate the classic design in every way?

Build Quality

Anyone looking for a modern, but passive, Jazz, with or without the 'F' word on the headstock, should certainly give this bass some attention.

The gloss-lacquered three-piece ash body has that caramel blonde hue, familiar to vintage natural finished instruments, with curves in all the right places. This isn't a light bass, weighing in at 4.6 kilos, and there is some obvious neck dive, but this is quickly rectified once on a strap. This bass resonates very strongly indeed against the player's body when worn, and for sheer comfort, there is certainly nothing to complain about – the offset body styling works so well.

In terms of playability, the profile of the flat-sawn rock maple neck is very pleasing without being too thick or thin but a happy medium between the two, closer to a shallow D-shape than anything else. The 22-fret maple fingerboard may be broad, but it has a reasonably flat profile and a comfortable 19mm string spacing at the bridge. The five-bolt neck pocket is solid, the neck very firmly seated and attached with additional graphite reinforcement bars in the neck for added rigidity.

The hardware maintains the vintage vibe perfectly with a mixture of chrome and black fittings, a Lakland stamped bridge unit that allows through-bridge and through-body stringing, black position markers

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

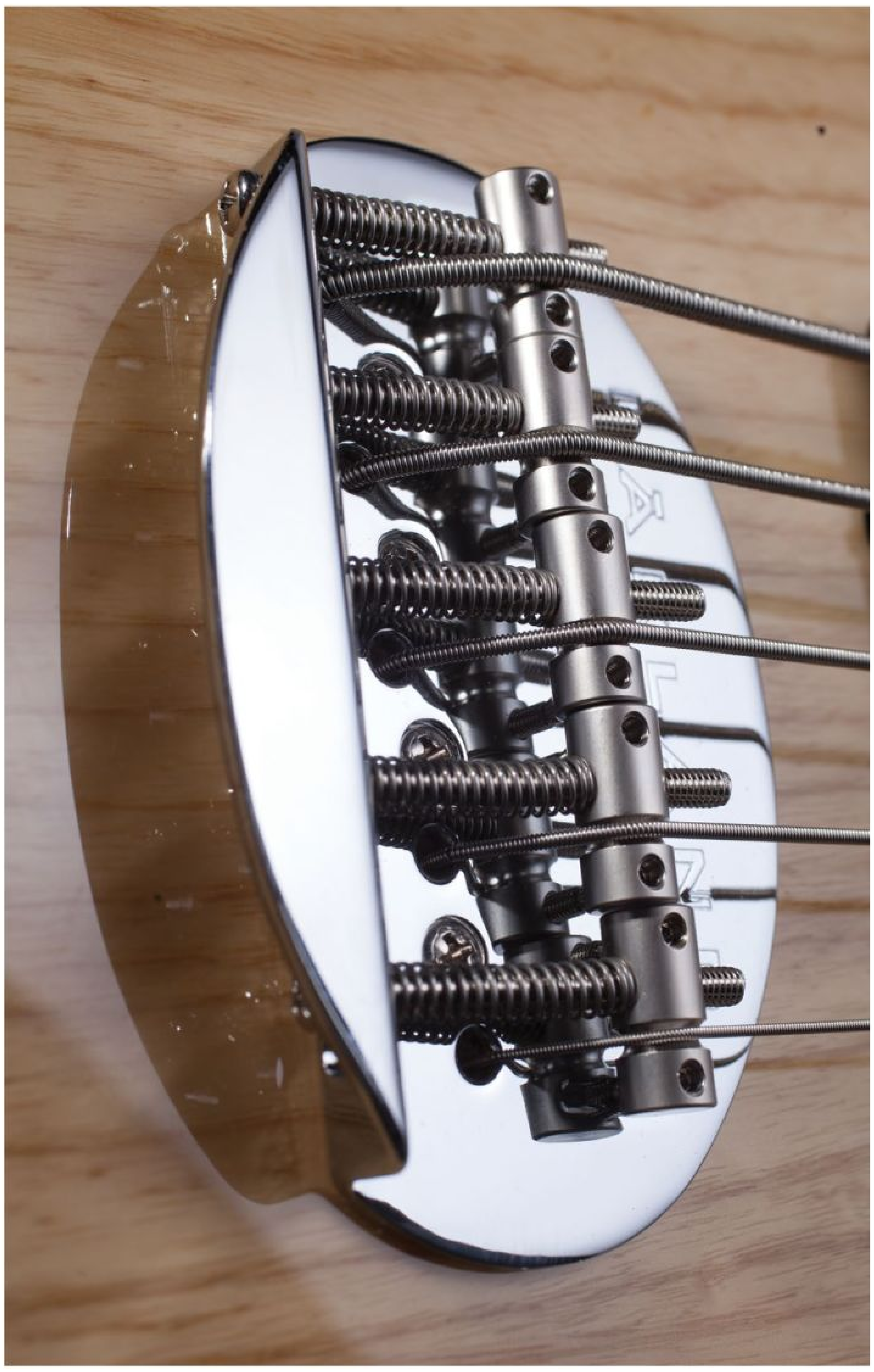
Price | £929
Made in | Indonesia, assembled in the US
Body | Ash
Neck | Rock maple, 35" scale
Neck joint | Bolt-on (five bolt attachment)
Nut width | 46mm
Fingerboard | Maple
Frets | 22
Pickups | 2 x Lakland vintage J single-coil pickups
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, volume, tone
Hardware | Hipshot Ultralite tuners, Lakland dual access bridge
Weight | 4.6kg
Case/gig bag included? | No
Left-hand option available? | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Good value for money, well-constructed and finished, classic tones and playability
Minus | A bit heavy but it feels solid
Overall | A quality instrument with all the classic hallmarks you would expect from a great Jazz. Buy with confidence

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE



> **"LOVERS OF ALL THINGS PASSIVE WILL FALL HEAD OVER HEELS FOR THIS BASS, AND ACTIVE FANS MIGHT JUST BE CONVERTED TO GIVE THIS A SPIN AS IT REALLY IS A VERY GOOD INSTRUMENT FOR THE MONEY"**

on the front facing and side of the neck, a chrome string tree covering all five strings, chrome Hipshot Ultralite machineheads with matt silver string posts, the familiar chrome control plate and vintage-style black controls for volume, volume and passive tone. This is finished off with a three-ply aged white (mint) scratchplate. The overall set-up is comfortable and the whole instrument feels solid, well constructed and very much up to the job.

Sounds and Playability

The signs of a good passive Jazz are a naturally woody tone, good sustain and a vibrant resonance: we are pleased to say, this bass has all three. The 44-60 has a solid fundamental tone that vibrates the length of the instrument – you can actually feel it when holding the neck. The natural tone is impressively rounded across all five strings with plenty of spring and 'bounce', as one would usually expect from a bolt-on instrument.

So plugging in, what do we have? A top-notch variation of a Jazz, I'd say. These single-coil pickups are throaty and raspy but with a real warmth to them: working with each pickup individually shows how much difference their respective positioning makes to the output. As one would expect, the neck pickup has a warmer delivery with 'plummier' tones and a rounded character, whereas the bridge pickup is capable of a far honkier, tighter tone. Of course, we should expect this, but the pickups, and the bass generally, do a great job in their approximations.

Fingerstyle, slap, pick playing and thumbstrokes all have their own dynamics and this bass delivers them very well with essentially equal string volume across all five strings: no mean feat on a passive bass. Obviously, the low B is louder than the G string due to its mass and size but the G string is no shrinking violet. All of the classic Jazz tones are here – there would be a problem if they weren't! – but the physical solidity of the bass coupled with its dynamic performance are all extra attributes. The low B doesn't have the bold mid-bias it might have were this an active bass, but within the passive tonal context, it doesn't let anyone down.

Conclusions

Lovers of all things passive will fall head over heels for this bass, and active fans might just be converted to give this a spin as it really is a very good instrument for the money. It puts in a very impressive performance, while maintaining a traditional vibe, coupled with vintage looks and excellent playability. Lakland five-string basses have always performed well, and despite this being from the cheaper Skyline range, there is no lack of quality or a perceivable drop in performance. Considering the cost of a US-made Jazz Bass, this might actually be considered a bit of a bargain: compare them and make your own mind up.

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MARLEAUX
Consat Sopran

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Joel McIver doubles down with a tiny bass that punches well above its weight

We love the big basses that land on our doorstep here at *BGM*'s command bunker, but from time to time we yearn for a smaller instrument that we can take seriously. Well, here it is. At over £1400, the Marleaux Consat Sopran (German for 'soprano', obviously) is evidently a major investment for such a small bit of kit, so we're intrigued to see what it offers.

Build Quality

Pick this almost unnervingly light bass up – with one hand, if you like, it's only 2.3 kilos – and the first impression, thankfully, is not amusement but satisfaction at its build quality. From the machine heads to the fret ends to the wooden electronic cavity cover, the Sopran emits a sense of well-engineered design, as it should at this price point.

The body and neck woods – the former customisable from a range of options, the latter a three-piece maple/wenge sandwich – look and feel very attractive, and there are at least a dozen finishes to choose from. The hardware feels solid and immovable, quite an eye-opener if your only previous experience of small guitars is your six-year-old's pink plastic ukelele. No criticisms here: everything on the Sopran works as it should.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £1,450
Made In | Germany
Body | Various options available
Neck | Three-piece maple/wenge
Neck joint | Bolt-on (six bolts)
Fretboard | Rosewood, 24 frets
Scale | 22.44" (57cm)
Pickup | Delano humbucker
Controls | Stacked volume/tone
Hardware | ETS/Schaller
Weight | 2.3 kg
Gigbag/case included? | Gigbag
Left-hand available? | Yes

WE THINK

Plus | Perfect for travel or for bassists with small hands
Minus | Purists may not take it seriously; price is steep; octaver is required
Overall | A tiny (but beautiful) bass for an equally tiny niche

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■■
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■□□□□□

Sounds and Playability

To give you an idea of the Sopran's 'feel', the scale – 22.44" – is a couple of inches *less* than that of most six-string guitars, while the 40mm nut width places it somewhere between a Fender Precision and Jazz. At the 24th fret (yep! a two-octave neck) it widens to 55mm, also a familiar feel for most of us.

This means that you're in no danger of running out of finger room: play anywhere on the neck and the main differences that you'll detect from playing a 'normal' bass will primarily be to do with the lightweight, .80 to .20 strings and the tauter tension that the super-short scale brings. Get past these slight hurdles and you'll be having fun before you know it.

Because it really is a hell of a lot of fun to play this bass. The default frequency range, an octave higher than a standard instrument, works perfectly well for soloing. Obviously you won't get the full low notes, and indeed Marleaux themselves recommend the use of an octaver if you're in need of those. Add one of these (we used a Red Witch Zeus pedal, for reference) and you're away, although purists should note that an artificially octaved tone is obviously not identical to a natural one.

On the subject of tone, this passive instrument comes with a single humbucker and a single stacked volume/tone control, so its range is sufficient rather than scintillating. The top end is adequate rather than glassy, the mids are acceptably usable – and the low end, unaided by that octaver, is not much to write home about for obvious reasons, but I think we've established that by now.

Slapping works – with care. Thumb strikes aren't fundamentally different to those you'd apply to a full-sized bass, but pops require a little more judgment thanks to the light strings and tension. Tapping is doable, with the same caveats. Essentially this little bass does everything the full-sized version does, but an octave higher. We love it, although it comes at a hefty price.

A major point, of course, is how you perform on stage with the Sopran strapped to your chest. You'll need it high-ish unless you have the eyesight of a hawk, so headbanging with it round your knees is out. Will audiences chuckle at you? They might...

"SO, WHO'S GOING TO PLAY THIS BASS? THE OBVIOUS (AND TRITE) ANSWERS ARE: ADULTS WITH SMALL HANDS, CHILDREN, GUITARISTS NEW TO BASS AND PEOPLE WHO TRAVEL A LOT"

Conclusion

So, who's going to play this bass? The obvious (and trite) answers are: adults with small hands, children, guitarists new to bass and people who travel a lot. The more considered response is that bass players who like to think outside the box will enjoy playing the Sopran. Add the octaver and you'll enjoy a fully-leaded bass tone and performance, although your drummer will no doubt laugh at you, especially if you're a bassist of 'amply-nourished' proportions, like yours truly. Ignore that, though: this is a superb, if rather high-priced, alternative solution to the problem of getting the low frequencies to people's ears. And you can take it on a plane with you. Take that, customs.

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HARTKE
HyDrive HD15 and HD25 Combos

Portable practice combos seem to be getting smaller by the day. Mike Brooks tests two lightweight combos from Hartke

Bass Gear	Korg UK
www.bassgear.co.uk	www.korguk.com

The HyDrive range, with their aluminium and paper cone hybrid, have proven to be very successful for Larry Hartke and his company. There will always be a market for small practice combos, and this pair of perfectly formed units would appear to address the needs of those looking to practice at home without shaking the walls and annoying the neighbours. Or is that exactly what they do? Size is almost irrelevant with current technology, after all…

Build Quality

The usual Hartke design ethos remains intact. These combos are built to last, sturdy but compact and simple when it comes to the control layout. Both combos are covered in a black vinyl covering, which looks and feels fairly durable, while metal corners have been fitted to protect either unit from bangs, knocks and general wear and tear. A solid

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Hartke HyDrive HD15 Combo
Price | £95
Made in | China
Power | 15 watts RMS
Impedance | 4 Ohms
Features | Volume, bass, mid, treble
Speakers | 1 x 6.5" HyDrive bass speaker
Dimensions | 316mm (H) x 309mm (W) x 202mm (D)
Connections | ¼" jack input, 3.5mm line input, ¼" jack headphone output
Weight | 6.1 kg

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | There's nothing to complain about at this price
Minus | Nothing at all
Overall | A great performance at a rock bottom price, lightweight and portable with enough 'boom' to do what it was designed for

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■□
SOUND QUALITY ■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE ■■■■■■■■■■

strap handle is located on the top of each combo for carrying ease and a black metal grille has been fitted to protect each speaker. Both combos come with rubber feet, although these can be removed if you want your combo to have contact directly with the floor to improve the low-end performance.

Speakers measuring 6.5" and 8" have been used on these combos, and although this may not sound like much of a difference, there will no doubt be some tonal variation, especially in the conveying of low notes. The HyDrive design certainly has its merits, incorporating the vibrant transient attack that Hartke speakers were originally noted for alongside the warmer, less acutely punchy performance of the traditional paper cone, so on paper it fuses the best aspects of both designs. Both cabinets have front porting to improve the bass response – and to be honest, both units will need as much help in that respect as they can get.

Both combos feature the same control panel, namely a ¼" jack input, controls for volume, bass, mid and treble, a 3.5mm input for external sound sources such as an MP3 player, laptop, tablet or phone and a ¼" jack headphone output. It's all very neat, uncomplicated and tidy, with nothing to get confused about: the overall design of both combos is sleek and to the point.

Sounds

With several basses to hand, both active and passive, it was quite noticeable from the start how different each combo sounded. For a 15-watt unit, the HD15 was remarkably full sounding and not especially lacking in tonal performance. Cranking the volume up with passive Precision and Jazz basses, there's plenty of volume, punch and definition on display. Obviously as you start to add hefty dollops of EQ boost and push the volume, the tone becomes a little harsh – but if you're of a plectrum-wielding persuasion, you might like the way that the sound gains a touch of grind. The active basses benefited from their onboard EQ, so adding more from the combo control panel at times became slightly excessive. Percussive techniques needed a little help in the treble department for some extra zing, but on the whole, the HD15 is surprisingly adept for such a small combo and low price.

The HD25, with its extra 10 watts of headroom, is obviously louder and in terms of bass frequency performance, the extra speaker size certainly adds to the low end. The quality of sound is a touch sweeter, as though the bass signal has extra room to breathe without sounding forced or pushed as much as it tended to do with the HD15. The slightly larger enclosure also gives the frequencies extra depth, which helped to present the characteristic thump you would associate with the passive basses. Giving an active five-string bass a spin, it's no surprise that the low B string sounded fuller through this unit than the HD15. The EQ is functional rather than exceptional, but the broader tones of the five-string were conveyed very well for such a small unit.

"THE FRONT END ISN'T FULL OF BELLS AND WHISTLES, BUT IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE: HARTKE HAVE DONE WELL TO KEEP BOTH OF THESE COMBOS SIMPLE, EASY TO USE AND UNCLUTTERED"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Hartke HyDrive HD25 Combo
Price | £149
Made in | China
Power | 25 watts RMS
Impedance | 4 Ohms
Features | Volume, bass, mid, treble
Speakers | 1 x 8" HyDrive bass speaker
Dimensions | 387mm (H) x 355mm (W) x 254mm (D)
Connections | ¼" jack input, 3.5mm line input, ¼" jack headphone output
Weight | 11.2 kg

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A deeper, louder sound than the HD15, more power in the low end
Minus | Nothing at all
Overall | At this sort of price, Hartke are onto a winner due to the performance, quality of sound and portability of this combo. Does what it was designed to do

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■■■

Conclusion

Both combos did a fine job and at these prices, there really is little to complain about. Portability is a big consideration, and both boxes get good marks in that respect. The front end isn't full of bells and whistles, but it doesn't need to be: Hartke have done well to keep both of these combos simple, easy to use and uncluttered. They're both hard-wearing in terms of their design and I can't imagine too many bassists being unhappy with their purchases if they're bought for their intended purpose. You would struggle to use either combo in a full-blooded rehearsal, although mic-ing up is always an option: in that case, you may be better off looking at the larger, and more expensive, HD50/75/150 models. Either combo is a cheap, worthwhile purchase, so get out there and investigate.

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RICHARD BONA signature

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- > NO COMPROMISE

WEIGHT 6.39 lbs / 2,9 kg

ATS
S310X2-T2 and C312X1-T3 Cabinets

Sound quality, power and portability are all important when buying cabinets. Mike Brooks finds out if these Italian cabs deliver

Bass Gear	ATS
www.bassgear.co.uk	www.atsitaly.it

Although not particularly prominent on these shores, ATS cabinets have been garnering some attention courtesy of those fine chaps at Bass Gear in Twyford for a couple of years now. Designed and hand built in Italy, their specification is top notch and very much geared towards accurate reproduction of your bass signal. With every amp manufacturer offering lightweight cabinets, how do these stack up in comparison?

Build Quality

It has to be said that neither cabinets blow you away in the looks department: there isn't much livery in evidence to create a signature look, so the visual aspect is best described as 'functional'. Both cabinets are rigidly constructed from mahogany and are covered in a durable vinyl, with metal grilles and rugged plastic corners – the dimensions of both cabs permit uniform stacking. Both models have recessed, top-mounted carry handles for easy transportation and both cabinets are designed to be lightweight while maintaining a full bass response. The 310 model is part of the 'S' range which are heavier units than the 'C' (Serie Light) range – but have no fear, both cabinets are portable and at these weights, you shouldn't

be afraid of incurring any back issues. The usual advice about safe carrying of heavy weights still applies, of course.

Both cabinets have side ports to ensure maximum performance from the side-positioned passive drivers which respond to pressure within the cabinet: they have also been fitted with two Speakon connections at the rear of each unit. The tweeter control ranges from a -9 dB cut to a boost of +12 dB on both cabinets for extra mid and treble response. With the 310 rated at 500 watts and the 312 rated at 300 watts, there will inevitably be some difference in their performance, but it will be interesting to see how different they sound. A 200-watt difference is a significant amount, especially for enclosures of this size. The laws of physics can't be rewritten – so an inevitable compromise has to be made somewhere.

Sounds

Using several different amps to test these cabinets, you're instantly impressed with the spread of frequencies and the high-quality performance of both cabinets. Taking each cabinet individually, the 310 has a tight, punchy voice but the bottom end display is certainly not lacking. Pushing the cabinet volume-wise with a flat EQ, the 310 is able to handle high volume levels without any discernible break-up of the bass signal. Adding some bass boost to fatten the tone makes the presence of the passive speakers very noticeable: placed in a corner, you might forget how small this cabinet it and that a 10" speaker is doing most of the work.

With the tweeter set at -3 dB, and a Jazz Bass in hand, the bass signal was forceful, smooth and well-rounded with no perceived harshness of tone. Increasing the tweeter to +3 dB, a more transparent top end is attainable: using the amp's extra mid response creates more of a 'bark' or growl to the tone. Again, pushing the volume up shows you just how well this cabinet can handle whatever you decide to throw at it.

The 312 has a naturally fuller response, due in no small part to the 12" speaker. Using a couple of powerful active basses, their extensive

> **"BOTH CABS ARE PRICED AT £599 — AND FOR MY MONEY, THE 310 IS THE SLIGHTLY MORE IMPRESSIVE CABINET DUE TO ITS EXTRA HEADROOM"**

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ATS S310X2-T2 Cabinet

Price | £599

Made in | Italy

Power | 500 watts RMS

Impedance | 8 Ohms

Frequency Response | 32 Hz-18 kHz

Speakers | 1 x 10" ATS custom active woofer speaker, 2 x 10" custom passive woofer speakers, compressed mid-tweeter with variable control

Dimensions | 450mm (H) x 360mm (W) x 460mm (D)

Connections | Two Speakon sockets

Weight | 16.5 kg

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A versatile cabinet, punchy with a tight midrange response

Minus | Pricey but built with sonic performance in mind. Dull to look at

Overall | A well-voiced cabinet with impressive projection for all musical styles, easy to transport and a pleasing tonal delivery

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY

SOUND QUALITY

VALUE

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

TS C312X1-T3 Cabinet
Price | £599
Made in | Italy
Power | 300 watts RMS
Impedance | 8 Ohms
Frequency Response | 30 Hz-18 kHz
Speakers | 1 x 12" ATS custom active woofer speaker, 2 x 10" custom passive woofer speakers and a compressed mid-tweeter with variable control
Dimensions | 450mm (H) x 360mm (W) x 460mm (D)
Connections | Two Speakon sockets, two ¼"-jack sockets
Weight | 12.7 kg

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A solid cabinet with a good frequency response and pleasingly light to carry
Minus | Disappointing in the power handling department
Overall | An impressive cabinet that benefits from being lightweight and tonally flexible

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

EQ circuitry was conveyed with a slightly more powerful delivery compared to the 310. A pair of the 312 cabinets stacked would be quite a rig with a monstrous sound. With the tweeter turned down, the 312 is a boxier-sounding unit with less natural punch than the 310, although that is to be expected. Turning the tweeter up gives a far more impressive delivery, with all the frequencies able to breathe, producing a much more rounded and fuller display than that of the 310.

The 312 is capable of more brute force in conveying your bass sound, but sonically it is somewhat restricted by its 300-watt rating. Bringing the tweeter into play is the icing on the cake, regardless of what type of bass or musical style you choose to play.

Conclusion

Both cabs are priced at £599 – and for my money, the 310 is the slightly more impressive cabinet due to its extra headroom. What it loses by having a 10" speaker, it makes up for in power handling. That's not to say that the 312 is blown out of the water: if large power ratings aren't a particular requirement for you, the 312 may sound better to your ears, and for those players that maybe don't require top end punch, the 312 might be a better option. Either way, I can certainly recommend taking a look at these cabs, and others from the ATS range: they may just offer what has been missing from your sound.

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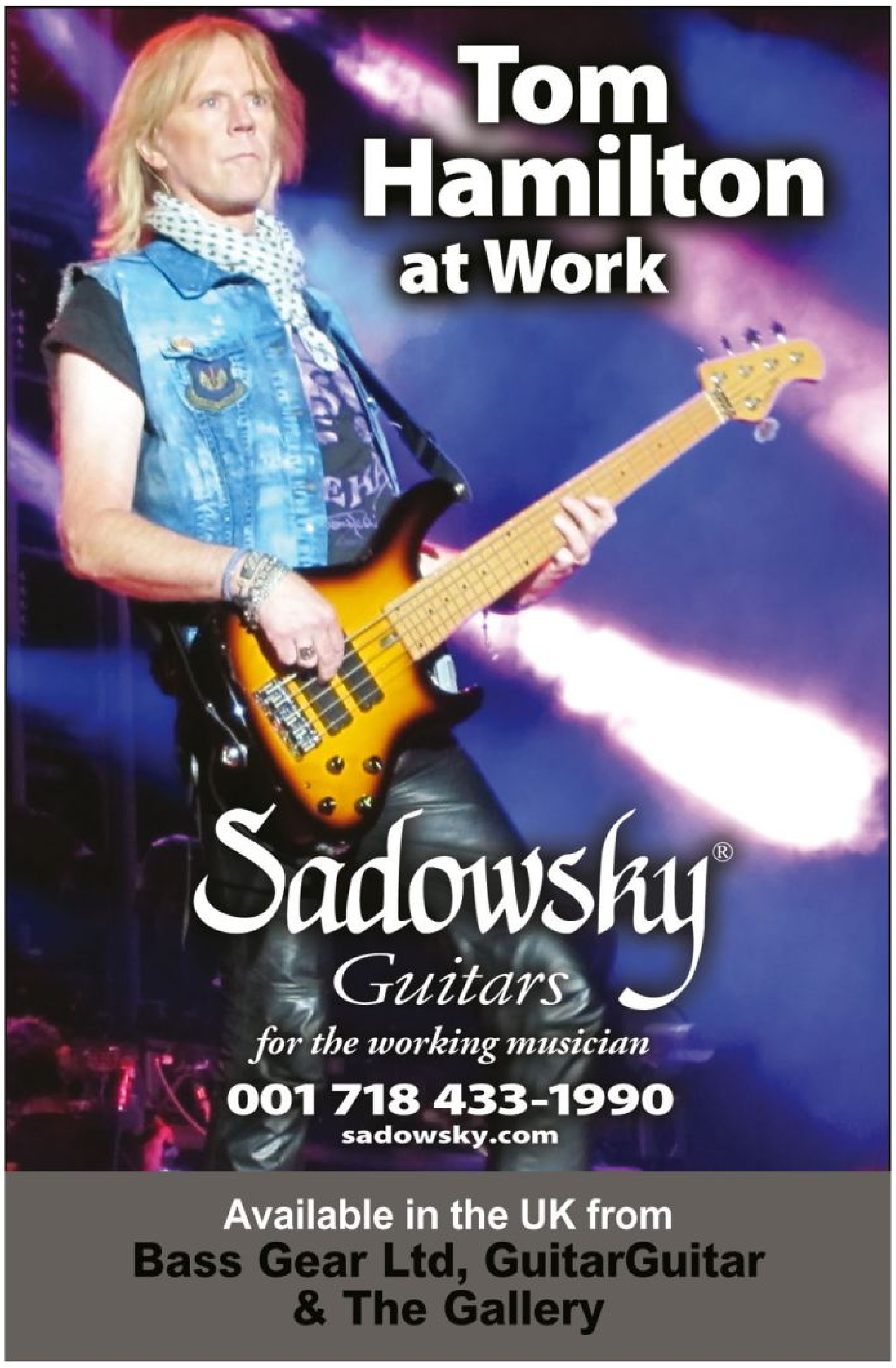
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BASSICS
BPA-1 Preamp

A new entry to the preamp market promises pro-quality EQ, compression and adaptability. Joel McIver steps into the blue zone

Bassics	Synergy
www.bassics.co.uk	www.synergydistribution.co.uk

Malcolm Toft, the designer of Bassics' new BPA-1 preamp, has a serious reputation, having mixed the Beatles' 'Hey Jude', engineered albums by David Bowie, James Taylor and T-Rex and founded Trident Audio, whose recording consoles have been used by Stevie Wonder, Elton John, Queen, Radiohead and Muse among other planet-sized bands. His company's first product is aimed directly at bass players and claims to make amp controls redundant, placing them at our feet.

That, in itself, may or may not be worth an outlay of £445, depending on your point of view: however, the BPA-1 has a stack of useful features that make it much more than simply an amp-in-a-box. You may not need all of these, so consider your needs and the potentially cheaper solutions that address those needs before you buy – but no matter how and where you play, we think you'll be impressed by the features on offer here.

The chunky, two-kilo box is immediately made popular round these parts by the big, multicoloured controls which light up like Blackpool Pier when you activate those parts of the unit, plus the included power cable (effects manufacturers, take note!), the silent switching

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £445
Made In | UK
Features | 2 x standard inputs, both with separate level controls (input 1 has impedance switch for piezo pickups) 2 x fully balanced DI outs, effects loop, bypassable three-band sweepable EQ with +/-15dB boost/cut, compressor, overall output level, overall mute
Power | Internal power supply; power cable included
Dimensions | L 35cm, W 12cm, H 7cm
Weight | 2kg

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Excellent, studio-quality preamp for professionals
Minus | None, although cheaper alternatives exist
Overall | Eminently usable preamp: recommended

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

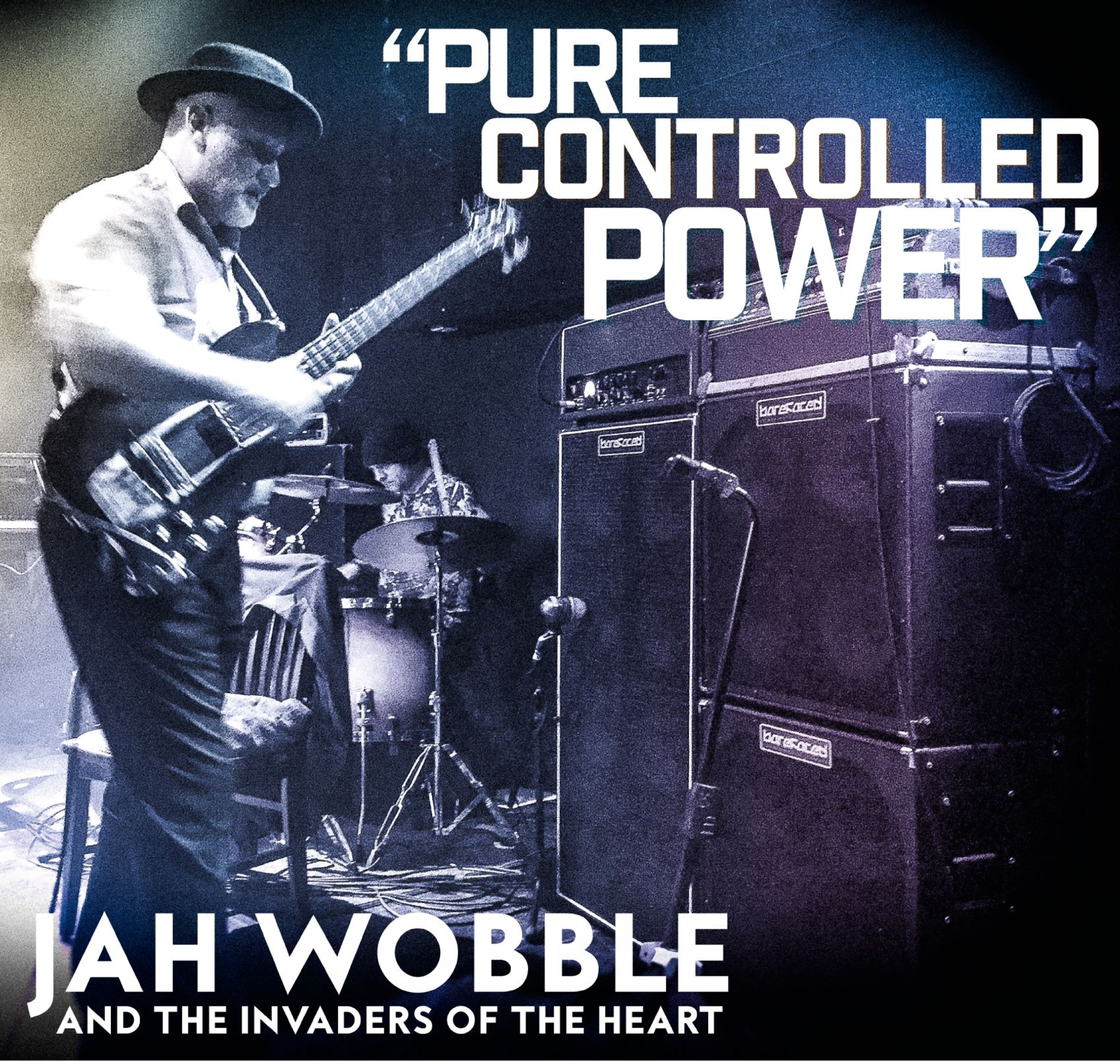
> **"PERHAPS BASSICS SHOULD CONSIDER A SUBTLER CHROME OR BLACK ALTERNATIVE?"**

and the fact that the internal power supply gives you peace of mind by adapting to AC voltages from 85 to 265 volts. That's the gig in Antarctica sorted, then.

You've got two standard inputs, so feel free to plug in two basses simultaneously and manage each one with individual level controls: one of the inputs has an impedance switch for piezo pickups, such as the one on your upright bass. At the other end you've got two fully balanced DI, jack and XLR outs and an effects loop. Between those points there's a bypassable three-band EQ with up to 15dB boost or cut (centrally detented for off), and a studio-quality VCA compressor. 'Bypassable' is the key word here: if you don't want a section activated, stamp on the bypass button and the lights go silently off. Control all this with an overall output level and an overall mute.

Once you're plugged in, with one or two basses, you can either use your existing bass and amp EQ in tandem with the BPA-1's own EQ, or set those controls to flat and just use the ones here. For our test we did just that, enjoying the quick, assertive response of the controls and the easy mastery which they give you over your sound. The compressor was especially effective, as it should be given the designer's studio history, and the boost is clean thanks to the unit's extra headroom.

The downside of all this is the unit's significant cost, although remember that you're paying for Toft's unparalleled heritage and the UK build – and we believe in paying for quality. There's also the fact that not everyone will like the blue box and Christmas-tree lights. Perhaps Bassics should consider a subtler chrome or black alternative? Those points aside, this is a product with great potential, and we'll be watching its progress with interest.



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BASS TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our redesigned tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in...
Joel McIver, editor

Ellen O'Reilly is a freelance bassist and vocalist currently studying at ICMP. Ellen has extensive experience in gigging, studio and television work.

ELLEN O'REILLY BEGINNER'S THEORY 72

Paul Geary attended the Berklee College of Music in Boston and the Musicians' Institute of Technology. He also heads up the Academy Of Contemporary Music's bass school.
www.paulgeary.com

PAUL GEARY BEGINNER'S TECHNIQUES 74

Stuart Clayton is a professional bassist and writer with over 20 years of experience in the industry. He runs the bass department at BIMM Bristol and Bassline Publishing, which has published a range of tuition and tab books.
www.stuartclayton.com www.basslinepublishing.com

STUART CLAYTON INTERMEDIATE THEORY 76

Rob Statham has amassed over 25 years as a professional freelance bass player. He has played in a wide range of musical settings, including jazz, blues, prog and classical, and he has taught for the past three years at BIMM London.

ROB STATHAM INTERMEDIATE TECHNIQUES 78

Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Brighton, Franc has worked with artists such as Steve Howe (Yes), Lisa Moorish, and Mike Lindup (Level 42). Franc uses Jeff Chapman basses and Elites strings.
www.francoshea.com

FRANC O'SHEA ADVANCED THEORY 80

Say hello to advanced techniques columnist Philip Mann, star of studio and stage. Ready to get those fingers flying? Mann up...

PHILIP MANN ADVANCED TECHNIQUES 84

David Etheridge studied double bass at the Royal College of Music. Since then he's worked with musicians such as Nigel Kennedy and Martin Taylor. David teaches double and electric bass and is the MD of two big bands and a 55-piece jazz orchestra.

DAVID ETHERIDGE UPRIGHT BASS 86

Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist, with 15 years of touring and 36 solo and collaborative albums to his name. He also lectures at colleges around the world.
www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON EFFECTS MAESTRO 88

Mike has written for *BGM* since 2004 and has been a bassist since 1987, clocking up over 3000 gigs around the world in the process. He has played for and worked with the likes of Bonnie Tyler and Toyah Willcox, and has a bass collection to rival a small shop.

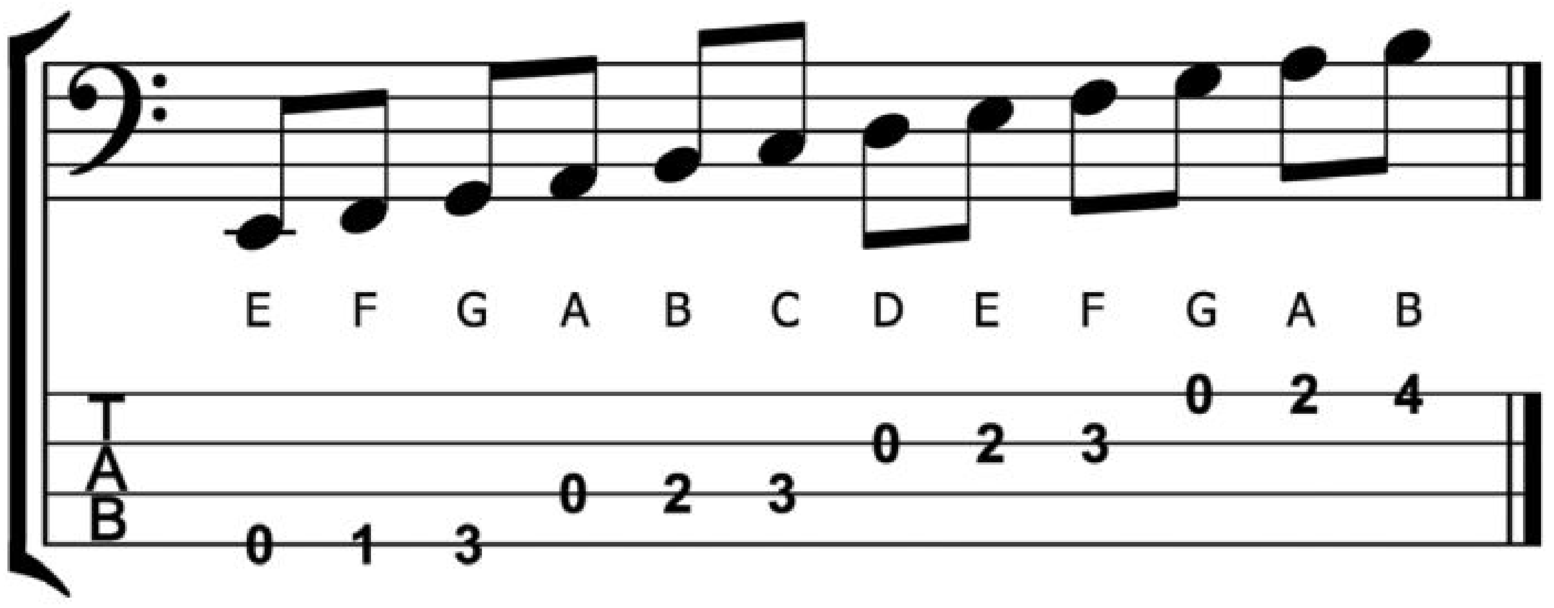
MIKE BROOKS CLASSIC BASS ALBUMS 90

BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

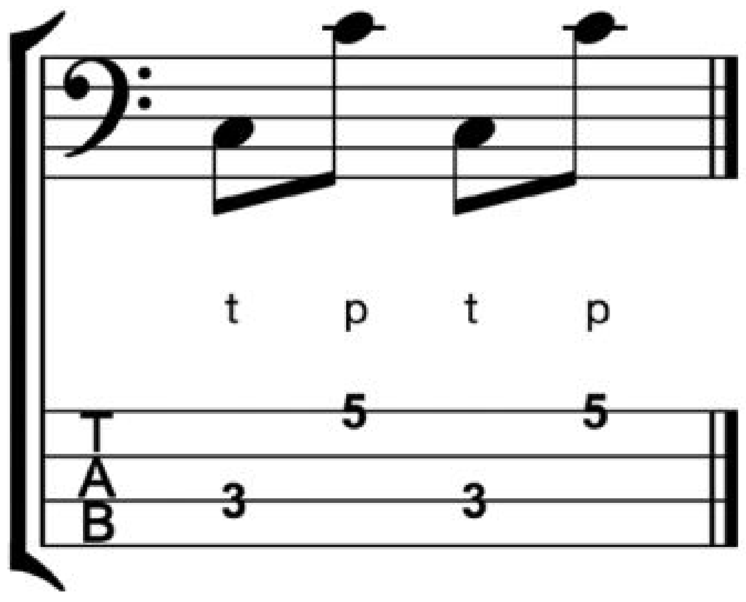
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.



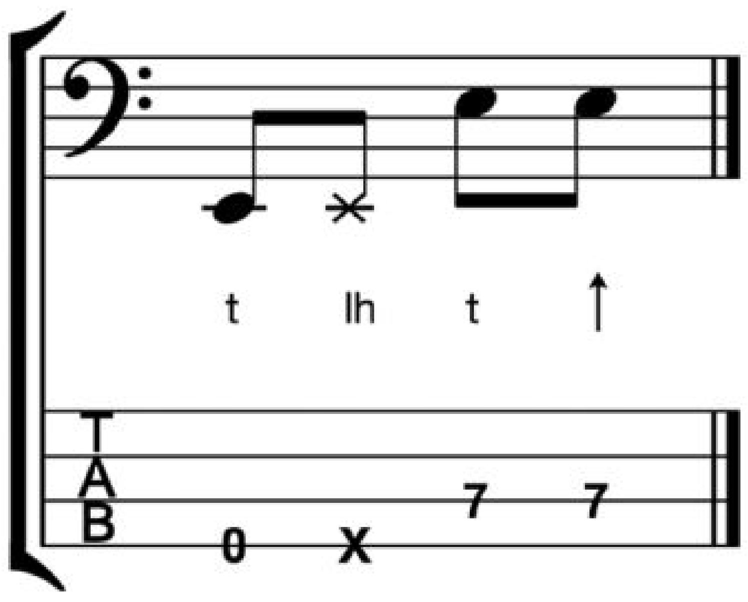
Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

PLAYING TECHNIQUES



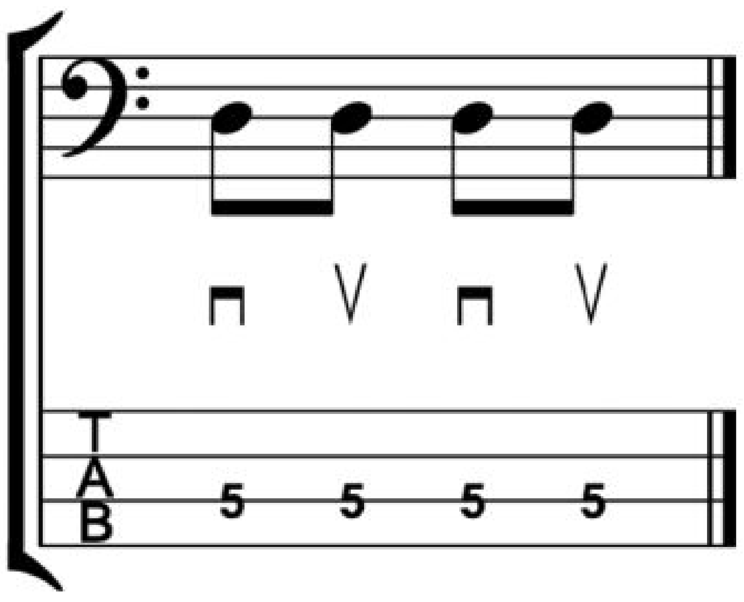
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



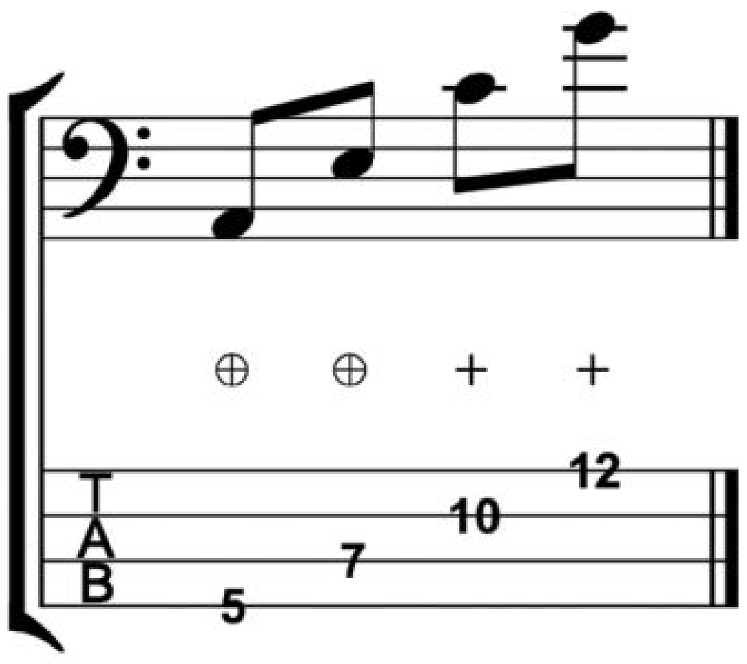
ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

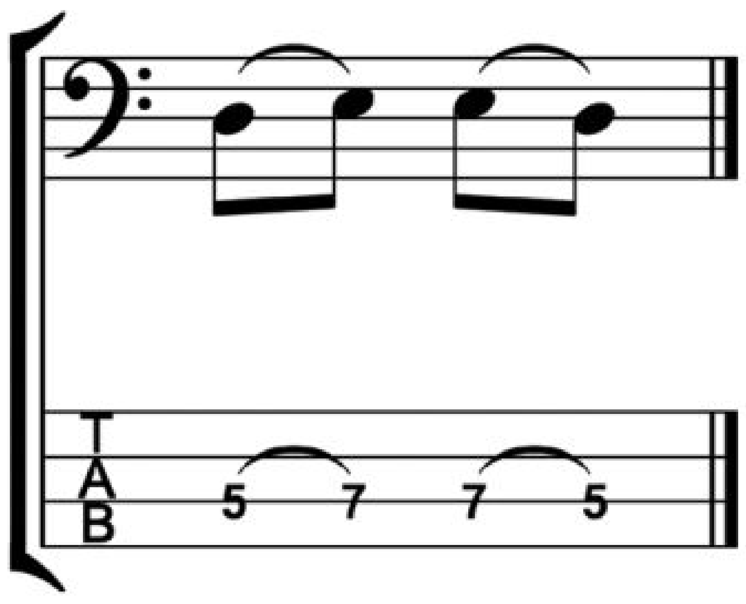
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

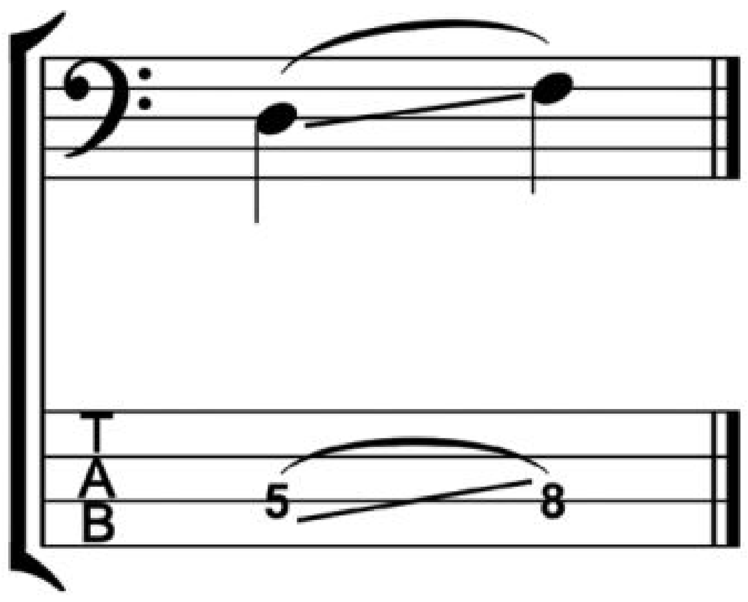
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are shown with '+'. Specific fingers will be shown with numbers if necessary

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



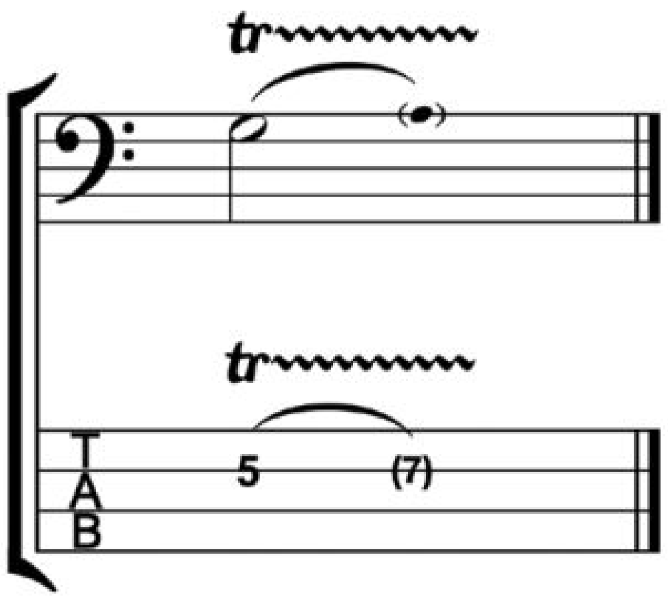
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



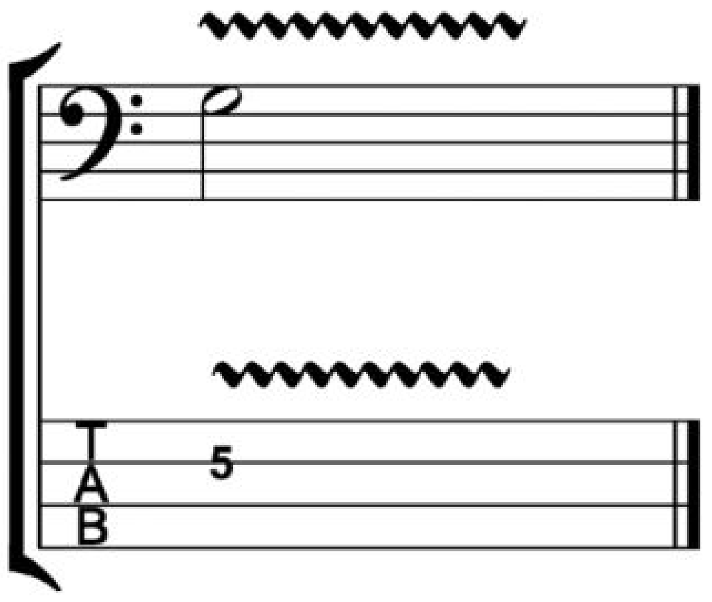
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note



TRILLS

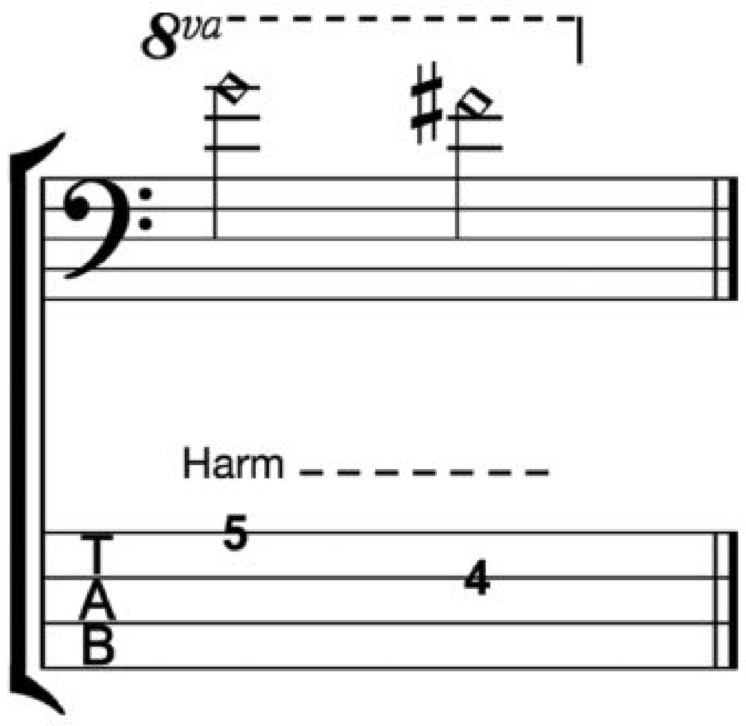
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs



VIBRATO

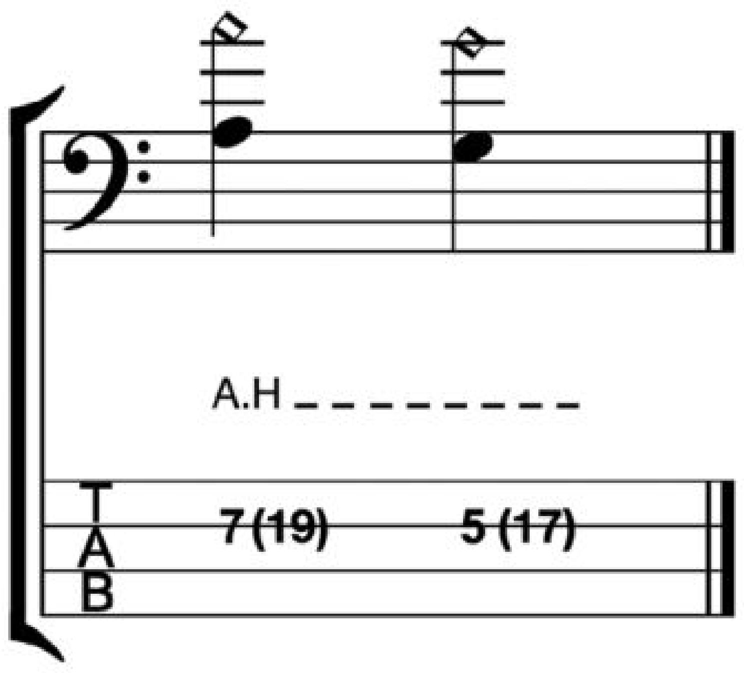
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

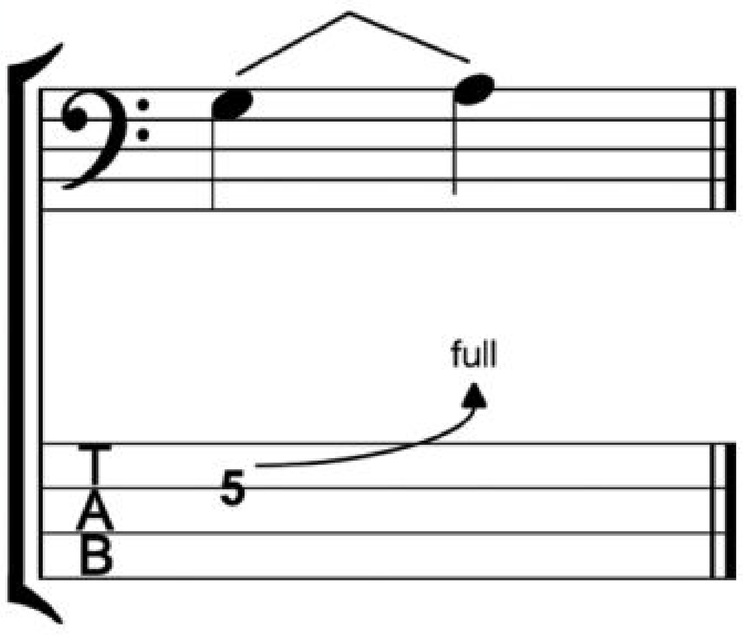
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

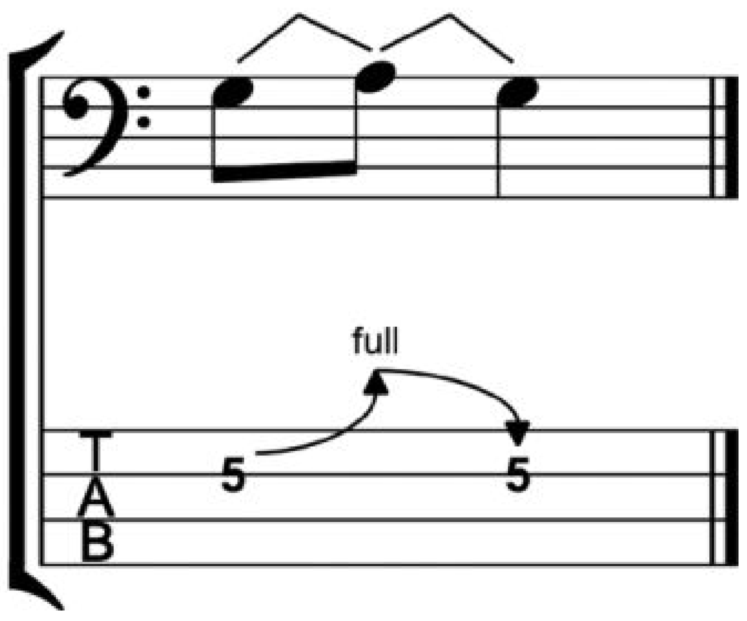
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and placing the edge of the picking hand thumb an octave higher (the note shown in brackets)

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

THE FRONT LINE

Want to make it as a professional bassist? Listen up as *BGM's* world-class bass team reports back from the tourbus

THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Jazz warrior Ruth on the redemptive power of music

Apart from playing bass in many bands, performing sessions and teaching, I also play bass for a charity group called Finding Rhythms. This is an organisation that travels around prisons in the UK and helps the inmates to write their own tunes, record them and produce a CD at the end of the run. The music is recorded and edited on site. It is really important for the inmates to express themselves creatively as well as learning how to work in groups – a skill that is easily taken for granted as a professional musician – and producing valuable work. For me, as a bass player, these sessions are equally important – and also challenging. Most of the time I have to use my skills to their maximum, because I have to record bass-lines in a very short amount of time.

There are some inmates with musical experience, but who lack the language to communicate their ideas. In their situation it is important to get the music sounding exactly as they want it, keeping it interesting and varied and maintaining the objective of releasing an album of great music. I need to know a lot of styles of bass-playing in this situation, because the composers often use other artists as reference points. Another requirement is to learn how to be quick with harmonic and melodic ideas, as writers often get stuck on an idea without knowing where to take it next. That point will have to be something that they can relate to comfortably. Other than recording bass-lines for the inmates' tunes and helping them write, I often jam with them, as most of them play an instrument to a certain degree. This work is obviously important for them, but also for me as a bass player, because I learn so much every time I do it.

www.ruthgoller.com

THE METALHEAD

IVAN MUNGUIA

Deeds Of Flesh bassist Ivan talks tone — and how to get it

At the moment I'm right in the middle of wrapping up writing for the last song on the new Deeds Of Flesh record, and so I thought it'd be fitting to talk a little about the tools and processes I use as a songwriter in a death metal band. I use a PreSonus interface with the BiasFX App for plugging directly to my laptop. Having a way to get killer sounds on the fly is essential, and a great tone is sometimes all that I need to spark my creativity. My creativity peaks in the wee hours, and once I'm set up I like to start my nocturnal writing sessions by shutting off my brain and just letting the ideas flow. My best material comes from grinding out riffs until I come across something that is aurally pleasing and worthy of being on a record. Another thing I like to do is put on an older album of my band and jam along to the drumming. I feel this helps when I'm trying to make sure my riffs have that Deeds Of Flesh sound and don't stray too far off into foreign territory. I try not to listen to other bands of our same sub-genre while in writing mode. The last thing I want is to be influenced by another band's song and subconsciously incorporate something too similar on the record. When I'm in a rut, I prefer to listen to other genres of music and other instruments to get ideas for rhythms that I would not normally

> "WHEN I'M IN A RUT, I PREFER TO LISTEN TO OTHER GENRES OF MUSIC AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS TO GET IDEAS FOR RHYTHMS THAT I WOULD NOT NORMALLY INCORPORATE INTO MY RIFFING"

incorporate into my riffing. I use GuitarPro as my notation software along with a Boss tap-tempo metronome to determine the BPM of my riffs. If you're not already familiar, I suggest spending some time becoming an expert at notating rhythm and time signatures, as being able to do so will help you get your ideas to other members of the band across without them getting diluted. Once I've collected a fair amount of useful material and written drums for reference, I send over a file to my guitarists Erik and Craig who then continue the arranging process and add, alter or edit to their liking. This process works well when you have three songwriters in the band as it helps take three different styles and incorporate them into one sound, rather than having three people write entire songs that all end up sounding different. It keeps the sound cohesive. Keep an ear out for the new Deeds record to hear what I mean. Until next time, happy riffing!

www.deedsoffleshmetal.com

THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Therapy?'s Mike ponders the art of creativity

© www-ashleybird-com

"How do you come up with bass-lines?" is a very common question that I'm asked from fans and fellow players alike. After some thought, I've realised I can boil the answer down to a couple of main methods. Most players will have certain riffs or parts already prepared from practice or writing sessions: in my case, these are basically ideas which I get from noodling around on the bass and trying to come up with memorable, hooky lines. These riffs can sometimes hang around for years waiting on the right song: it's always good to have a few of these on the backburner. The other method is working off song ideas in collaboration with the rest of the band. If it's a chord-based structure, I work out the basic root notes and see what grooves or supporting parts sit well with them. I try and keep these grooves simple, as usually they'll be moving from chord to chord and I have to adjust the fingering to reflect this. If it's a riff-based idea I try and complement it: normally good rock riffs have clarity to them, so I really like to keep the bass simple and not get in the way of that directness. If I'm starting from a drum idea, I work out variations which sync up with the kick drum: these can be very sparse but dynamically good for verse parts, or a variation within a song arrangement. Once I have these basics locked down and I'm working with what the drums and other instruments are doing, what happens next is normally dictated by the arrangement. This is probably the most fun part, as you can look at dynamic tweaks to either develop or simplify parts. Both techniques are extremely effective in adding drama to songs: that bass 'weight' can be considerable when used in choruses, 'rock out' sections of songs or where the bass becomes less intrusive. I always keep refining these parts during rehearsals and run-throughs: there's a perfect balance that has to be struck for the bass in order for it not to dominate the vocal melody or overcomplicate the feel of a song. That's the nuts and bolts of it: sometimes a bass-line tends to come together using all or none of the above. It's not an exact science, and I feel to create distinctive, individual bass parts you need to sometimes just play from the gut while keeping track of what everyone else is doing.
www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

THE EXTENDED-RANGE SPECIALIST

STEWART MCKINSEY

Ten-string-manipulating legend McKinsey on performance

You've worked to learn your instrument and develop your technique. Now you have the chance to perform alone on stage, whether you're delivering one of Bach's cello suites at a recital, showcasing your interpretation of a jazz standard in a coffee house or offering a composition of your own. What do you do? First, keep in mind that even if you're extremely prepared or the venue is familiar, the moment you start to play is a new moment. You haven't been there before, so the unexpected can always arise. You'll need to be open and flexible, to try and manage expectations of yourself or your audience. You will be dealing with adrenaline and the realities of making music with electronic equipment. If it's something you can't fix in the moment, don't make things more complicated. For example, if your performance leans heavily on an effect or two, make sure before you set up that your equipment is in the best working order possible, obvious though that may sound. Next, you must cultivate calm. Calm is your friend. When you're at ease, you're not worrying and able to focus more clearly on what it is you want to do. Your audience will pick up on your state of mind from your expression and your body language before you even start to play, so remember that you're in command. This is your moment. You chose this. You know what you're doing. Relax. Breathe. You don't have to be perfect. It would be great if all your performances were flawless, but then you wouldn't be human. Since you are, try not to put undue pressure on yourself before you ever play a note. Since you know the music and this is a new moment, you'll be fine. Remember, it's called playing – so let yourself enjoy and your audience will, too. Because this is a prepared piece, you can focus on the details, the subtle things that bring a performance to life and give it colour: dynamics, phrasing and most important of all, your personality. People are there for you and for your interpretation. Make it unique. You've already put in the practice. Now let it be filtered through you and the moment. Next month we'll address some of the specifics of improvising, and how that is similar and different to what's written here.
www.facebook.com + search 'Stewart McKinsey'

ELLEN O'REILLY

Pic by Eckie

Beginning bass? Ellen makes it easy

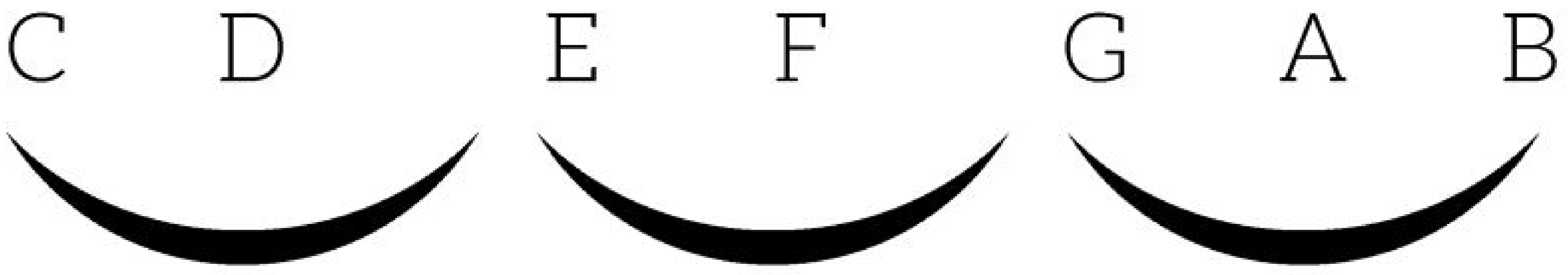
Hey bass buddies! Over the last few columns we've been looking in depth at all the various scales, pentatonics, triads and arpeggios we are most likely to need in our day-to-day playing, but now it's time to go back and see where they all come from.

The most important scale you will ever need to know is the major scale: all the other scales and triads we have explored stem from this one mother scale. Practically all the popular music you hear is based on this scale, and as we noted before, the various modes are just a way of playing this scale from any given degree (note in a scale).

Modes are simply a way of accessing the correct notes in a given key from any other note. For example, if you're in the key of A major, then you have three sharps in your key signature, so you really need to be playing F#, C# and G# and not the natural notes of F, C and G. Modes ensure that you play the correct accidentals for the key you are playing in. As you'll see, all these little chunks of theory are interconnected and stem from the major scale – it's that simple!

Now it's time to put all this to practical use. First, we need to assign chords to each degree (note) of the major scale. We can work out what chords go where by harmonising the major scale. We do this by stacking thirds up from each degree of the major scale. Let's use the key of C major as an example as it has no accidentals (sharps or flats) for you to worry about.

For the first note of C, we can build up a chord by skipping every other degree. Take C but skip D, take E but skip F and add G. These notes make the C major chord: the intervals here are root, major third and a perfect fifth. You see the manner in which we skip notes in the example below:

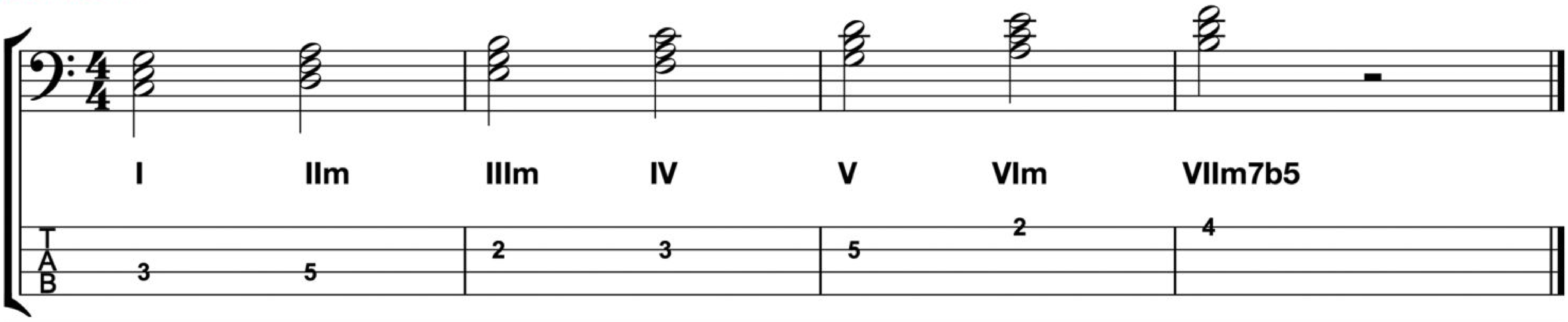


If we start from D and skip every other note we get D, F and A, which makes a D minor chord. It's a minor chord because the intervals are root, minor third and perfect fifth. Continue in this way all along the scale until you reach the octave. You'll see a chord trend appearing of major, minor, minor, major, major, minor and minor.

We can apply numbers or roman numerals to each of these chords to easily identify them, so as shown in the example on the stave, we have chords I (1 major), IIm (2 minor), IIIm (3 minor), IV (4 major), V (5 major), VI (6 minor) and VIIm (7 minor, more specifically referred to as half diminished or min7b5).

Take a look at the example and play them on your bass: you'll clearly hear the difference between the major and minor chords. Arpeggiate each chord as you move up the scale. In the next column we will explore this concept further – have fun!

EXAMPLE 1



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PAUL GEARY

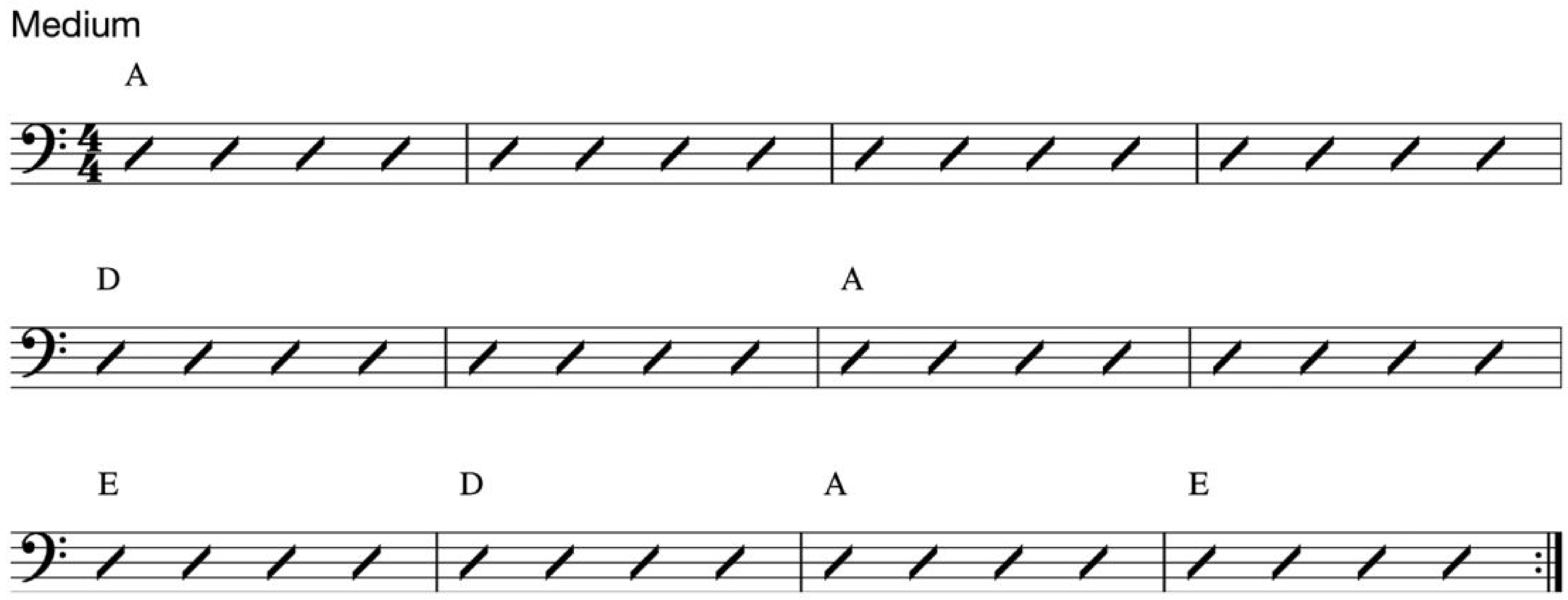
Nik Kershaw bassist Paul Geary plays the blues

This month, I would like to start a new series of columns on blues technique. This genre above any other has permeated many other styles of music. Whether you're interested in rock, funk, Latin or reggae, there is most likely to be found a blues fill, lick or phrase somewhere within the mix. Having a 12-bar blues down in some shape or form is a good way of communicating and playing with any musician for the first time. Everyone should know a 12-bar blues, so let's find out how to play one effectively and with precision.

EXAMPLE 1

This is a basic chord chart for a 12-bar blues shuffle in the key of A major. The main thing is to be aware of the chord progression (or form) of the chart. You will notice that the A chord lasts for four bars before you change to the D chord. This particular 12-bar blues arrangement is called 'slow change', but this has nothing to do with tempo or speed. It is to do with when you change chords and the order in which they occur, predominantly the first chord leading to the IV chord.

At first, try rooting the chord progression, outlining the chord changes with quarter notes on each beat. Let's play this whole progression in second position. Fret A at the fifth fret of the E string with the second finger of your fretting hand. Use the same finger to move across to the fifth fret of the A string to play the D chord root. We then have two bars of the A chord, so move back into position using the same finger. Next is the E chord for one bar. Use the little finger of your fretting hand to play this at the seventh fret of the A string. Move down to the fifth fret to play the D chord and back to the E string, fifth fret to play the A chord, each for one bar only. Finally we play the E chord root at the seventh fret of the A string. The last four bars are commonly known as the turnaround: this grouping of chords will get you back to the start, so you can play it over again on the repeat.

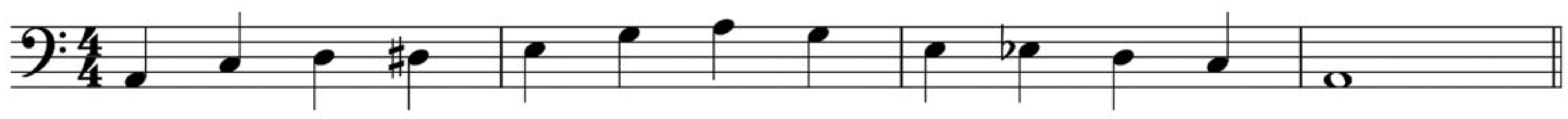


EXAMPLE 2

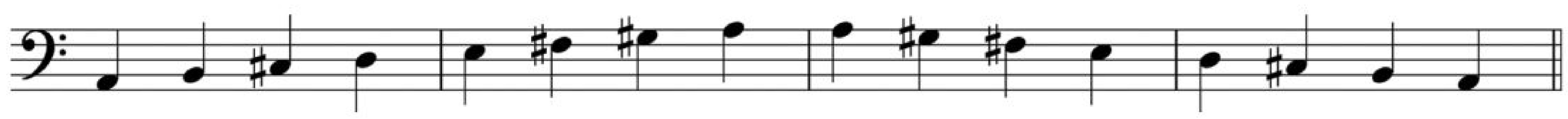
Now let's take a look at some actual note choices and articulation. We can start by analysing two scales, the first of which is the blues scale. Play this in open string position by using the open A string, or if you prefer at the fifth fret of the E string. Set your metronome to 100BPM and play the open A string followed by the C note at the third fret of the A string. Next, use open D string followed by D sharp at the first fret of the D string. Next is the note E played on the second fret of the D string followed by the open G string.

We then descend, fretting A at the second fret of the G string. After that, play an open G to E, at the second fret on the D string. As we descend, play E flat at the first fret of the D string, followed by open D, then C and open A as before. Let's compare this to the major scale. It is important that we hear the difference tonally between each scale. We can then begin to use notes from each to construct a bass-line. Let's play the A major scale in open position first, and then try it at the fifth fret of the E string, starting with the second finger of the fretting hand.

A Blues Scale



A Major Scale



> "WHETHER YOU'RE INTERESTED IN ROCK, FUNK, LATIN OR REGGAE, THERE IS MOST LIKELY TO BE FOUND A BLUES FILL, LICK OR PHRASE SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE MIX"

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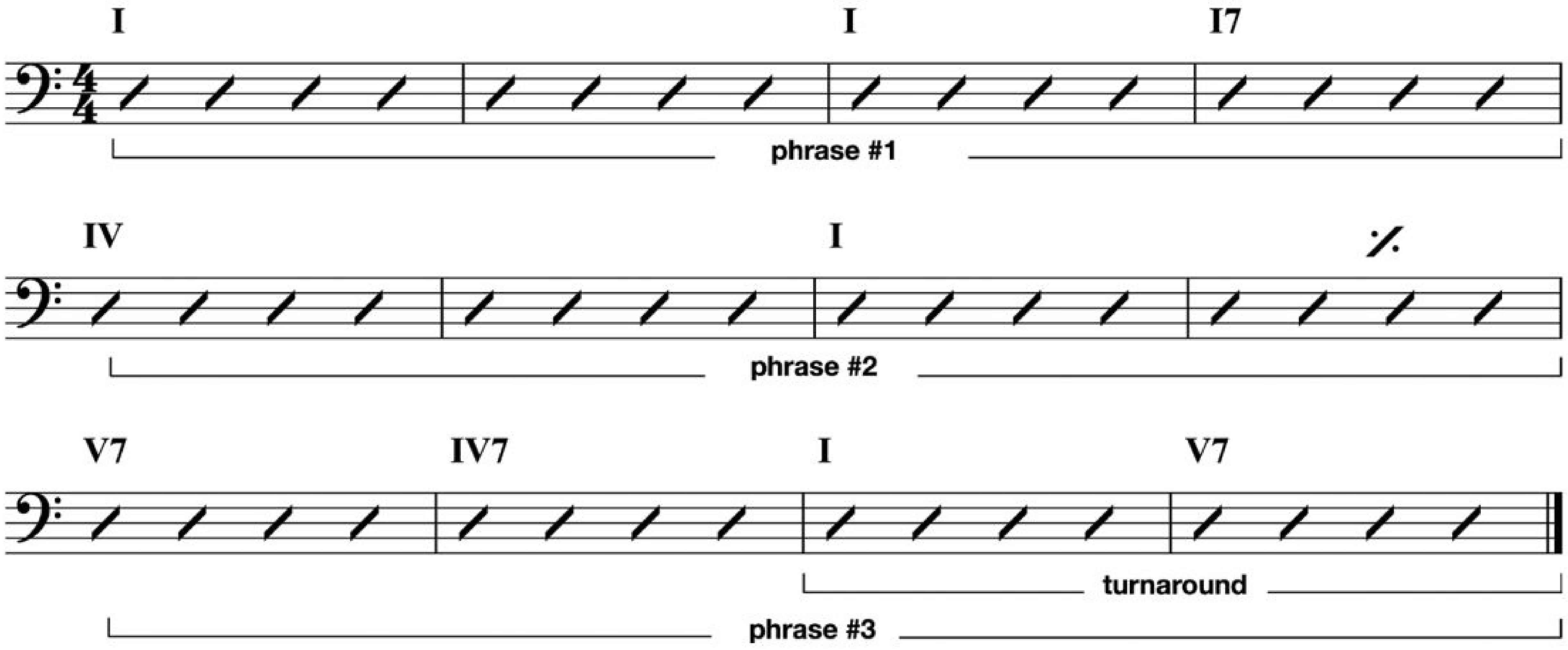
EXAMPLE 3

Here I have mapped out the form using roman numerals. It can sometimes be easier and quicker to use this numbering system to write out chord changes, as each number relates to a chord in a given key. The A chord becomes one (I). The D chord is four (IV) and the E chord is five (V). The numbers after the numerals, (I'7) (V7) and (IV'7), relate to the quality of chord, being either a triad or a seventh chord within that key.

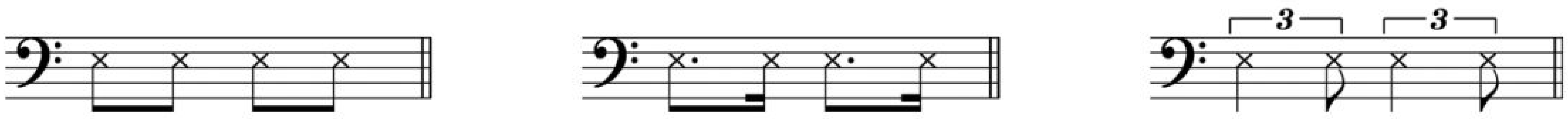


EXAMPLE 4

This is some basic blues articulation in straight eighths, where we play quavers throughout the whole progression that are not swung. Note the dotted eighth and sixteenths. This is a typical blues shuffle feel in swing time, with tied triplets. This has a breakdown feel to the whole progression, and is really useful when used as a feature within the progression on a repeat section.

Finally, you will see that I have given you all the examples with and without tablature. Try practicing the notes and scales in different positions – for example, by starting the whole blues progression in second position at the fifth fret of the E string. This will help you to understand the notation, not just the tablature.

We will continue the blues next time. As always, have fun!



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STUART CLAYTON

Bass educator Clayton enters the blues zone

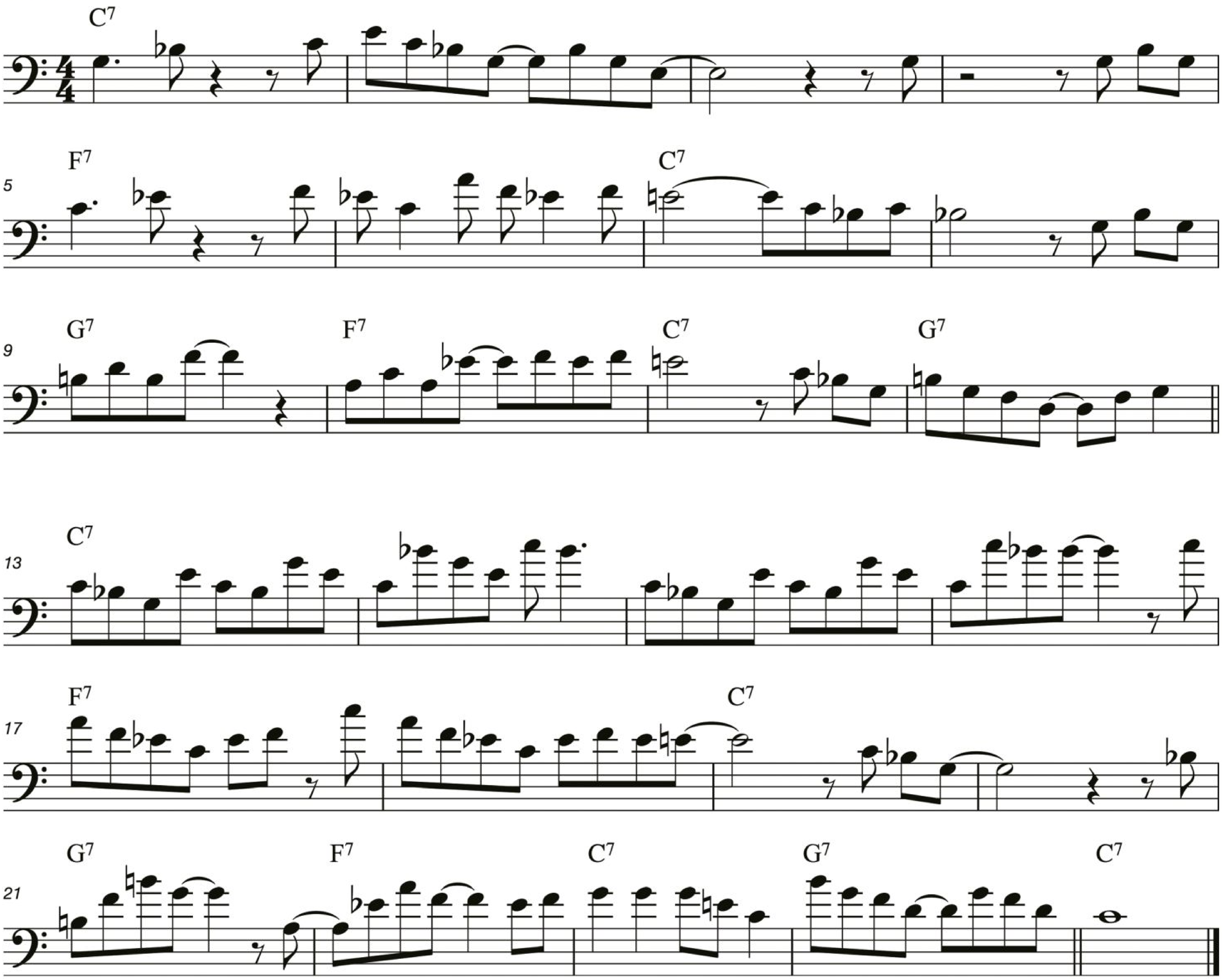
Welcome back to my new series of columns which aims to get you playing simple solos on the bass. In this month's installment, we'll be continuing to solo over a C blues, this time adding in some more complex rhythms. We'll still be limiting our note choices to the four chord tones for each chord (R-3-5-7) however.

Before we begin, let's recap. In this first installment of this column, I introduced you to the four main types of seventh chords: major seventh, minor seventh, dominant seventh and minor seventh flat five. We looked at a wide range of ways to play these chords as arpeggios, first over one octave, then over two. As part of your ongoing practice, I recommended that you slowly learn to play these arpeggios all over your instrument, not using patterns, but by learning which notes belong in which arpeggio. Doing this with all four arpeggios – and in all twelve keys – will be time-consuming and will certainly take you a long time to master. Remember that this kind of work should ideally form a significant part of your practice routine if you seek to be able to play freely on the instrument, over any chord, and in any key. I hope you are getting on well with this – if not, get in touch via the mag and let me know.

In last month's installment we began soloing over the 12-bar blues in C. We focused on only using the notes in each chord and using very simple rhythms – just crotchets and minims. Limiting your palette to chord tones will ensure that your solo lines illustrate the harmony very clearly – if you've ever transcribed a solo that you enjoy, you'll likely have been surprised to see how frequently chord tones are employed (I highly recommend transcribing solos and we'll cover this in a later column). If you've been practicing this concept at home, you'll have probably found that your solos are quite effective, if very simple. In this month's installment, we'll add some more rhythms into the mix, allowing you to play more complex lines.

"I RECOMMEND THAT YOU LEARN THIS SOLO THOROUGHLY AND SPEND TIME GETTING ANY PHRASES THAT YOU PARTICULARLY LIKE UNDER YOUR FINGERS. REMEMBER, AS ALL OF THE CHORDS ARE DOMINANT SEVENTHS, ANY LINES YOU LIKE CAN BE EASILY TRANSPOSED TO WORK OVER ANY OF THE OTHER CHORDS IN THE SEQUENCE. ONCE YOU ARE COMFORTABLE PLAYING THIS SOLO, TRY IMPROVISING SOME SIMILAR LINES OF YOUR OWN. RECORD YOUR EFFORTS AND LISTEN BACK"

EXAMPLE 1



Example 1 shows two choruses of a 12-bar blues in C. As you can see, it's a busier solo than the two examples we looked at in the last column. Quaver-based rhythms and syncopations have been used extensively. A few points of interest:

- Note how very few of the phrases here begin or end on the root note of the chord. Using the root too often will make your lines sound predictable and a little too 'safe', for want of a better word. If you analyse the starting and ending notes of the phrases here, you'll see that usually the third or the fifth is used.
- Voice leading – as covered last month – has been used to smooth the transition between the chords. For example, the F at the end of bar six (the root note of the F7 chord), leads seamlessly into the E (the third of the C7 chord) at the beginning of bar seven.
- Many of the phrases between begin on upbeats, or the 'and' of the beat. Simple rhythmic displacement is a good way to get more out of a limited palette of notes such as this, but if you analyse any great solo, you'll hear that starting phrases on upbeats is more common than beginning on downbeats.
- Note the use of a three-note phrase in bars 13 – 14. Here, we begin on a C and play three chord tones descending: C, Bb, G. Then we move up to the next note in the chord and play three notes descending from there: E, C, Bb. Three-note figures such as this are great for solos as they will alternately begin either on the beat or on the offbeat.
- Note that the same phrase – transposed accordingly – is used for the G7 and F7 chords in bars 21 and 22. Repeating phrases at this point in the blues usually sounds good.

I recommend that you learn this solo thoroughly and spend time getting any phrases that you particularly like under your fingers. Remember, as all of the chords are dominant sevenths, any lines you like can be easily transposed to work over any of the other chords in the sequence. Once you are comfortable playing this solo, try improvising some similar lines of your own. Record your efforts and listen back. Keep a record of your progress and write out any ideas that you come up with that you like. Remember that your practice time doesn't need to be spent playing continuously: analysing and listening are important as well.

That's all for this month. Next time around we'll be moving on to another popular chord progression – the ii-V-I. See you then!

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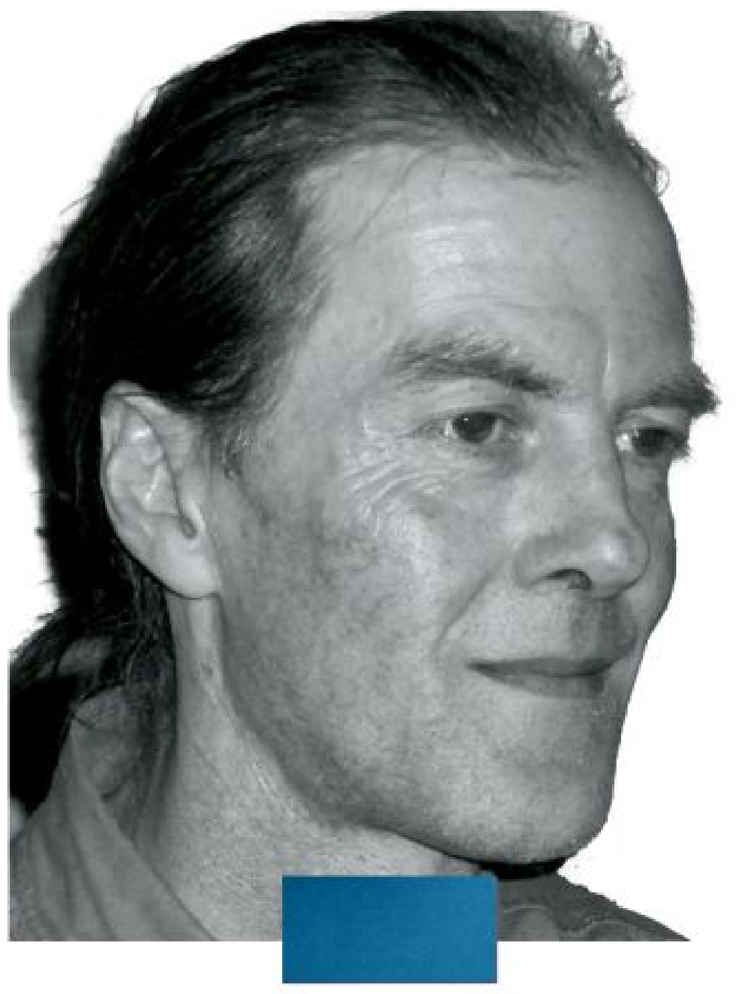


ROB STATHAM

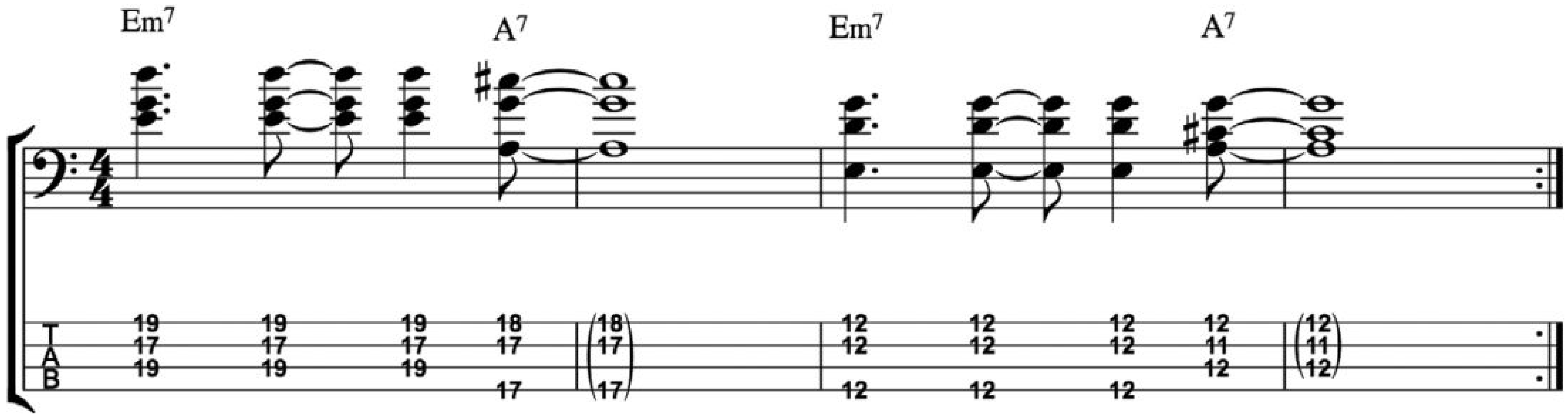
Chordal possibilities explored with the legendary Rob Statham

Playing chords on the bass can be very useful as an orchestration option, perhaps accompanying guitar or voice. There are some fairly obvious basic chord voicings that bass players tend to learn and these can often serve us well. However, on their own they're rather limited and don't provide many possibilities for voice leading. This is most noticeable in a situation where we might simply be vamping on two chords, our limited options becoming quickly apparent. Let's demonstrate some possibilities that can help us provide some variety and effective voice leading ideas for a simple, two-chord vamp.

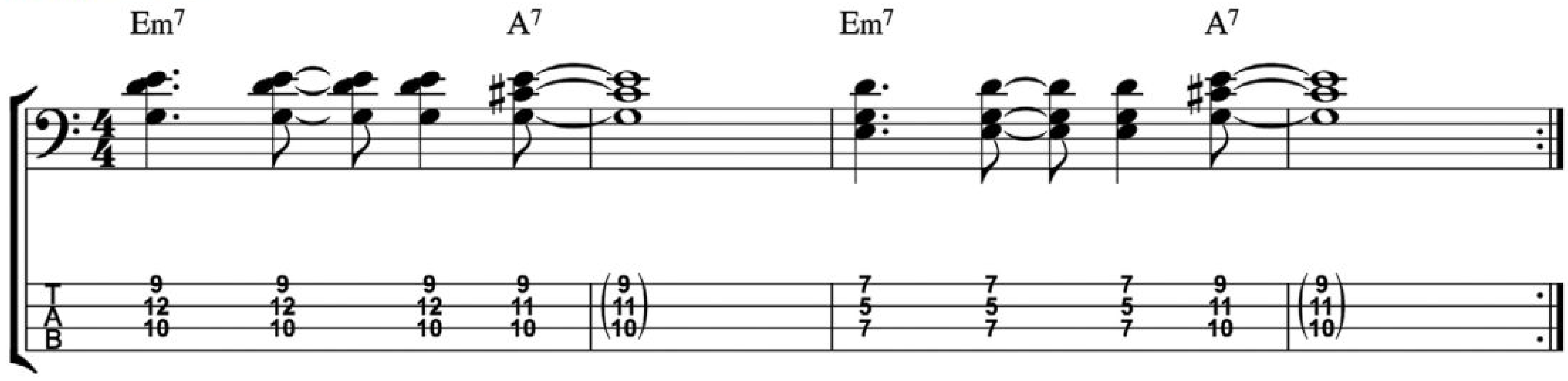
To that end, all the examples are based on a II-V vamp, specifically E minor 7 to A7, although we will add some upper chord tones and altered notes in the third and fourth examples. I would add also that although I have written a specific rhythmic pattern, this is purely for the sake of the example and you may vary this as you choose.

Example 1 shows the common chord shapes many of you are familiar with. These are effective voicings and amply delineate the harmony, making use of the root, third, and seventh of the chord. These types of voicing tend to come in two varieties. The first works on three adjacent strings with the chord in close position – that is, all in one octave – and thus consisting of the root, then third, and seventh on top. The second requires the root note to be played on the E string, then the seventh two strings across, and

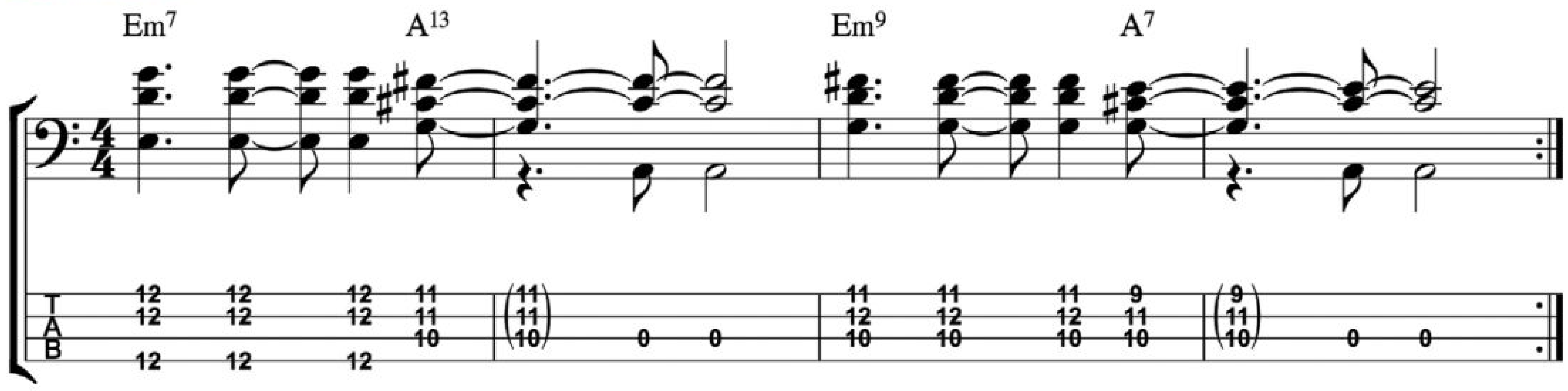
EXAMPLE 1



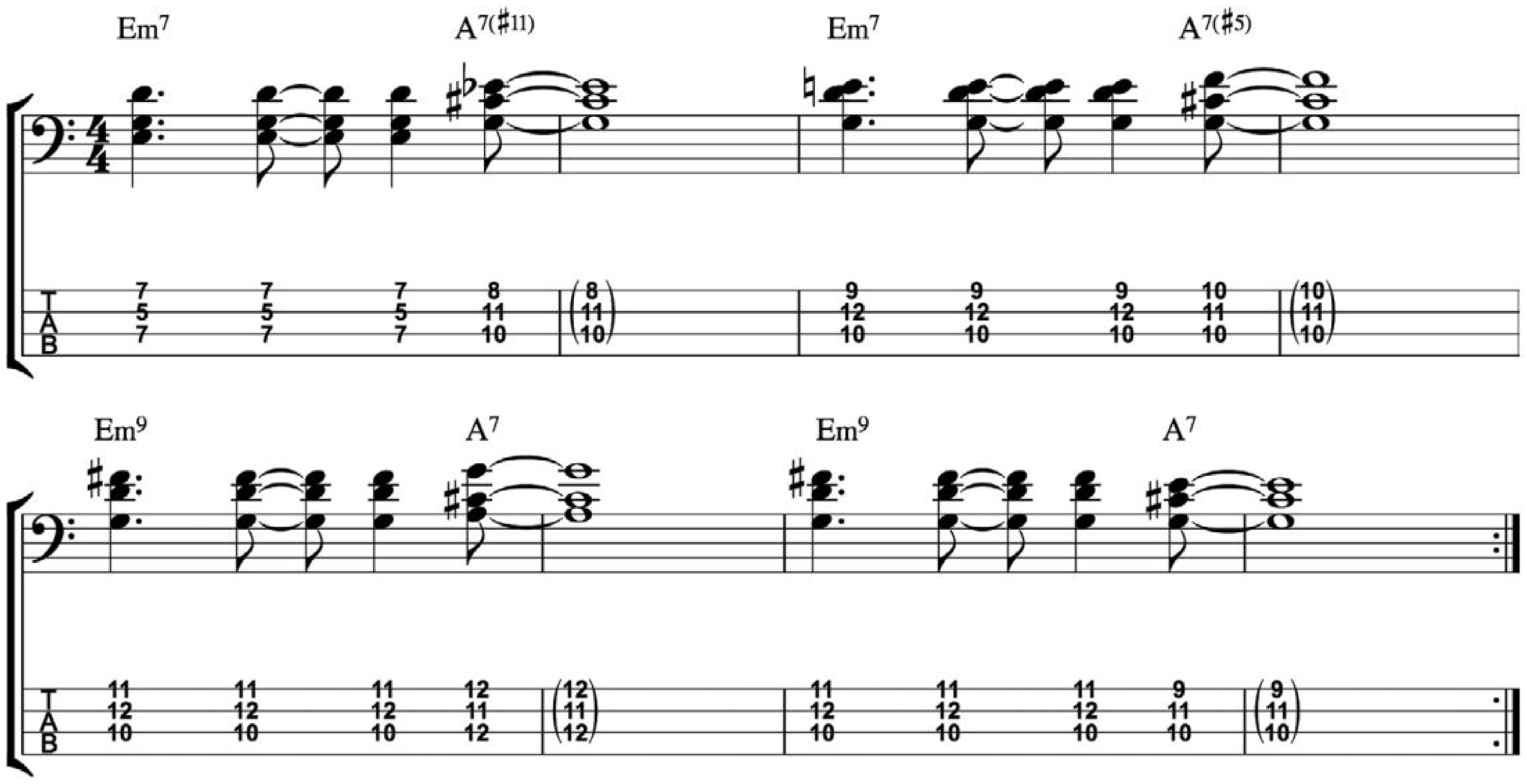
EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



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with the third an octave higher, thus played as a compound interval, on the G string.

Moving between these two possibilities provides good voice leading, and in the context of our two-chord vamp suggests two options. So, in the first two bars we have the E minor 7 chord played in close position moving to the compound A7 voicing, and the reverse of this in the third and fourth bar. This is good voice leading because in each case the third and seventh swap roles between each chord, using the minimal possible movement, which is a good basic principle of voice leading. Thus in the first two bars the top D is the seventh of the E minor 7 chord, then moves down a semitone to C# to become the third of the A7 chord.

Example 2 starts with an alternative voicing for the E minor 7. Again, it uses the root, third, and seventh, but this time the root note is the top note with the seventh below that and the third as the lowest note in the voicing. Using the principle of minimal movement when moving to the A7, the third and seventh again swap roles: the top note, the E natural, stays where it is and becomes the fifth in the A7 chord. This does mean that we are leaving out the root note for the A7 chord but it is implicit in the harmonic movement and thus this voicing serves perfectly well as an A7 even without the root.

In the third bar I have written the same voicing for the E minor 7 as in the first bar of **example 1**, though down an octave, and then moving back to the A7 voicing used in bar two with the fifth on top. Taken as a four-bar loop, it amply suggests the harmony and provides contrast to the first example. Obviously these voicings can be mixed and matched in any situation: thus we begin to create the possibility for more variety in this two-chord scenario.

Example 3 introduces some upper extensions to add more harmonic colour. Here we begin with the same voicing for the E minor 7 as in the third bar of the first example, thus using a basic voicing using root, seventh and compound third. This effectively establishes the tonality letting us be less explicit in the second chord, an A13, consisting of the thirteenth, an F#, on the top, with the third and then the seventh below that. Alone, this voicing would sound quite ambiguous, but in the context of following the E minor 7 it is quite effective, again the harmony implicit in the harmonic movement. Even so, this key lets us add an open A for the root in the second half of the bar, as indicated, which helps reinforce the tonality.

In the third bar, the E minor 7 becomes an E minor 9 by playing an F# on the top of the voicing, with the seventh and third beneath that. Again, we are leaving out the root, but the harmonic movement is suggested quite strongly in spite of this, and although I haven't written it in, judicious use of an open E would help establish it further. The final bar is the A7 voicing from the second example, with the fifth on top, and here I have written in the open A to help establish the harmony. Clearly we can't always make use of a convenient open string to do this, as it will depend on the key we are playing in, but where possible it is a useful consideration.

Finally, in **example 4,** I show how alternative voicings and the use of upper extensions might enable us to play eight bars with a rising voice leading line on the top to add a certain character to our basic two-chord vamp. Here we begin with a root, third, and seventh close position E minor 7, so with a D on top. In the next bar, we move to an A7 with a D# on the top, the sharp 11 thus suggesting an altered dominant. From here we can move to an E minor 7 with the root on top followed by an A7 with the sharp five on top, an F natural. This is followed by an E minor 9, so the F# on top, and then a close position A7 with the seventh on top, a G natural.

Thus, up to this point, we have created a line on the top of the chords, moving chromatically up from D to G, yet still working within our basic two-chord vamp, albeit with some upper extensions and altered tones. For the last two bars this top note line moves back down, via an F# for the E minor 7 in the seventh bar, and an E natural on top for the last bar, so an A7 with the fifth on top.

As you can appreciate, having more chord voicings in our vocabulary lets us combine them in many different ways and create some effective voice leading lines. Even within the context of just a two-chord vamp, this provides many possibilities for variation.

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FRANC O'SHEA

The master explores contrary motion in solo bass composition

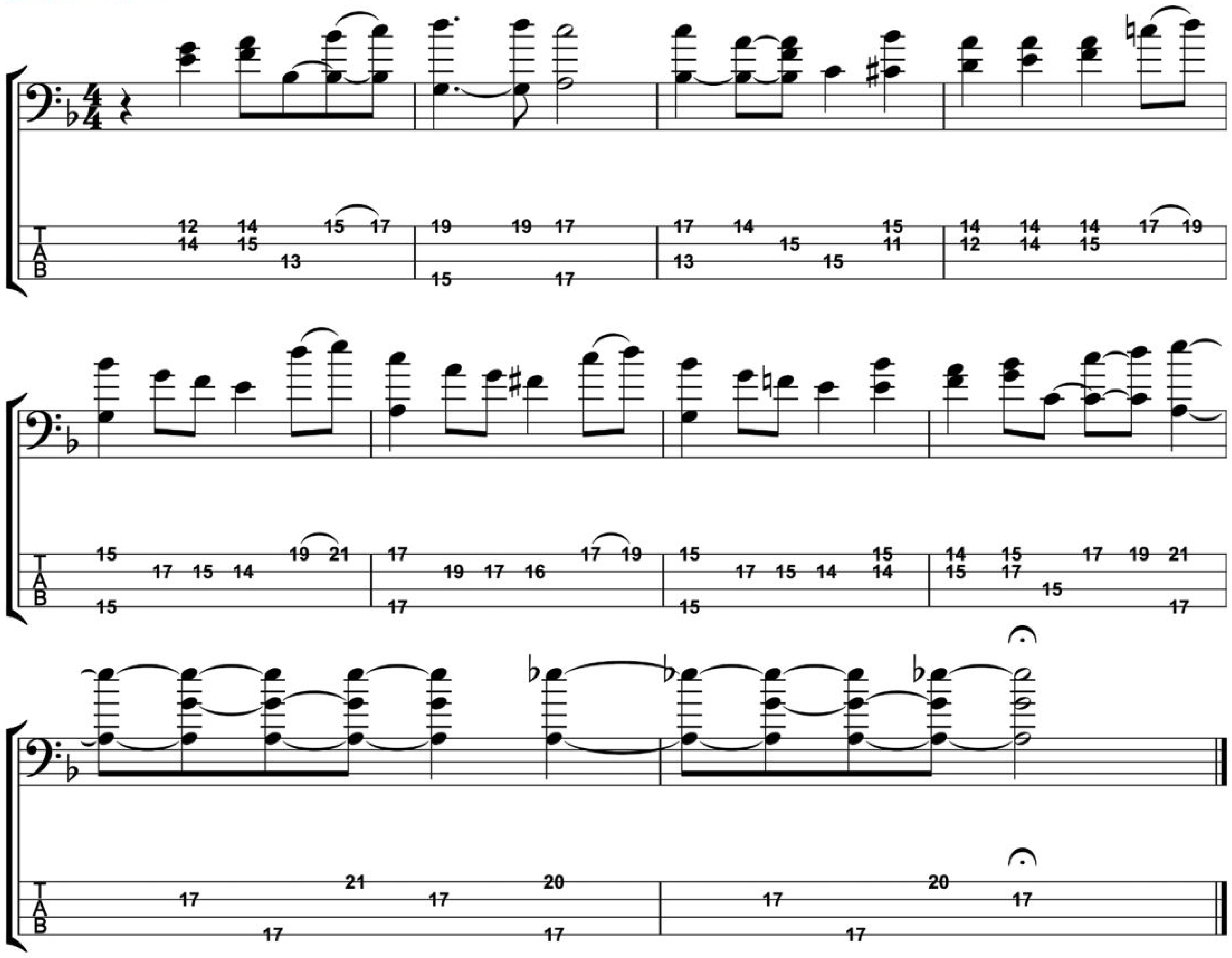
In this month's column I will be continuing my series on building a chord/melody solo bass piece by looking at creating the effect of more than one person playing at once, by employing parts that use contrary motion as well as other musical devices.

Example 1 starts with two rising parts, using similar motion in thirds for the crotchet on beat two, and then the quaver on beat three, in the first bar. For the rest of bars one and two we see that the parts become independent, and contrary motion is used for the transition from beats one to three in the second bar. The lower part moves up a tone from G to A, and the upper part descends from a D to a C. A similar movement occurs where the third bar leads into the fourth, with the transition from beat four to beat one.

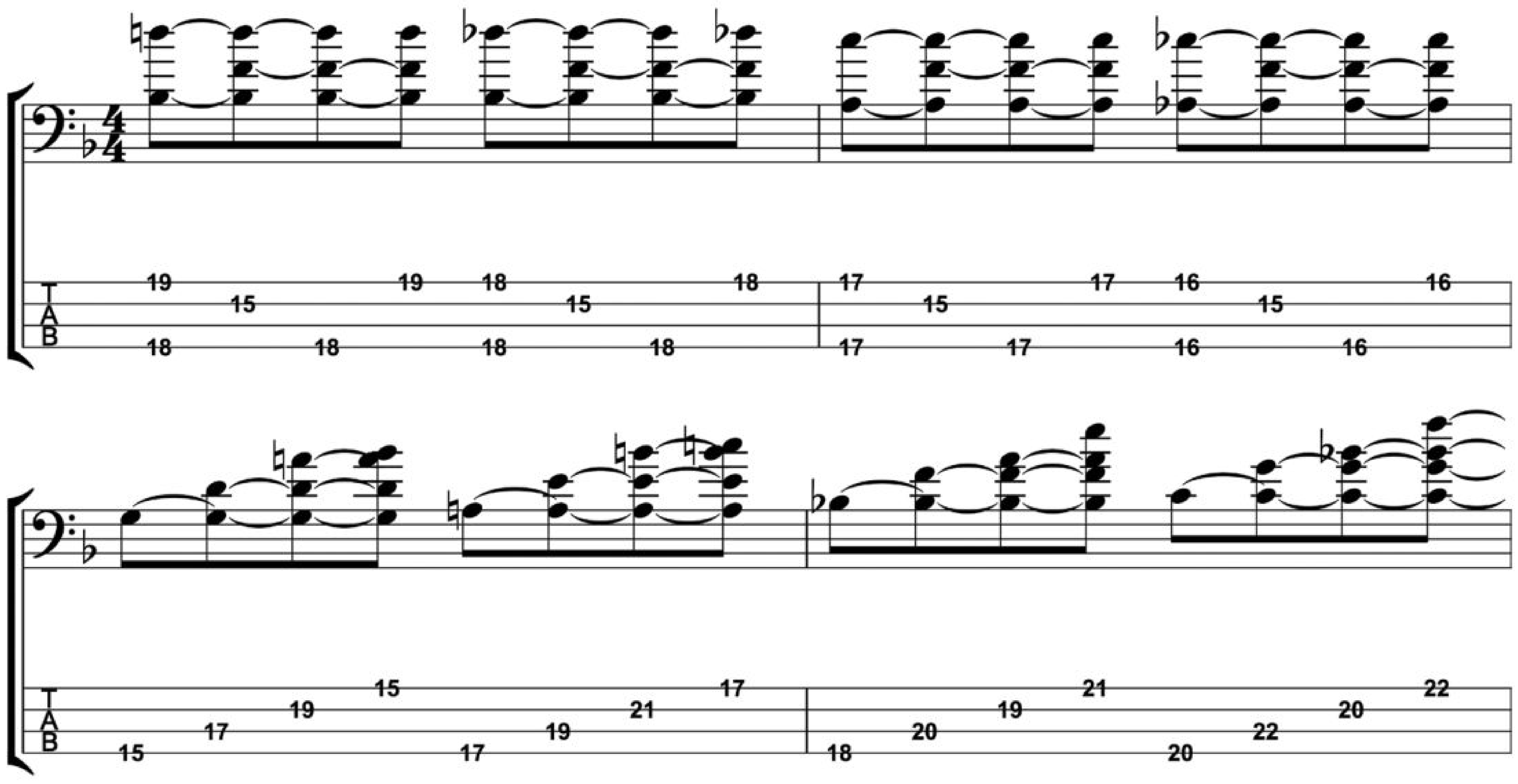
Bars five, six and seven demonstrate the influence of Johann Sebastian Bach on my composition, before contrary motion is employed again in the transition from bar seven to bar eight. A similar figure to that used in the first bar appears in bar eight. This time it is transposed up a scale degree in the key, and the ending leads into a series of descending chords using voice leading. The method of using similar phrases but altering them slightly, as in bars one and eight, and also in bars five, six and seven, helps the listener to follow the flow of the musical structure, while the alterations of the themes allow the music to stay fresh and not appear too obvious.

The descending series of voice-led chords that appear in bars nine and 10 of the first example continue in bars one and two in **example 2**. The common feature of all of the chords is that the note F, which appears at the 15th fret of the D string, is sustained throughout. The Ab diminished 7 chord, appearing on beats three and four of the second bar, smoothly voice-leads down a semitone to the G minor add 9 chord in bar three. This classic chord spans the E, A, D and

EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



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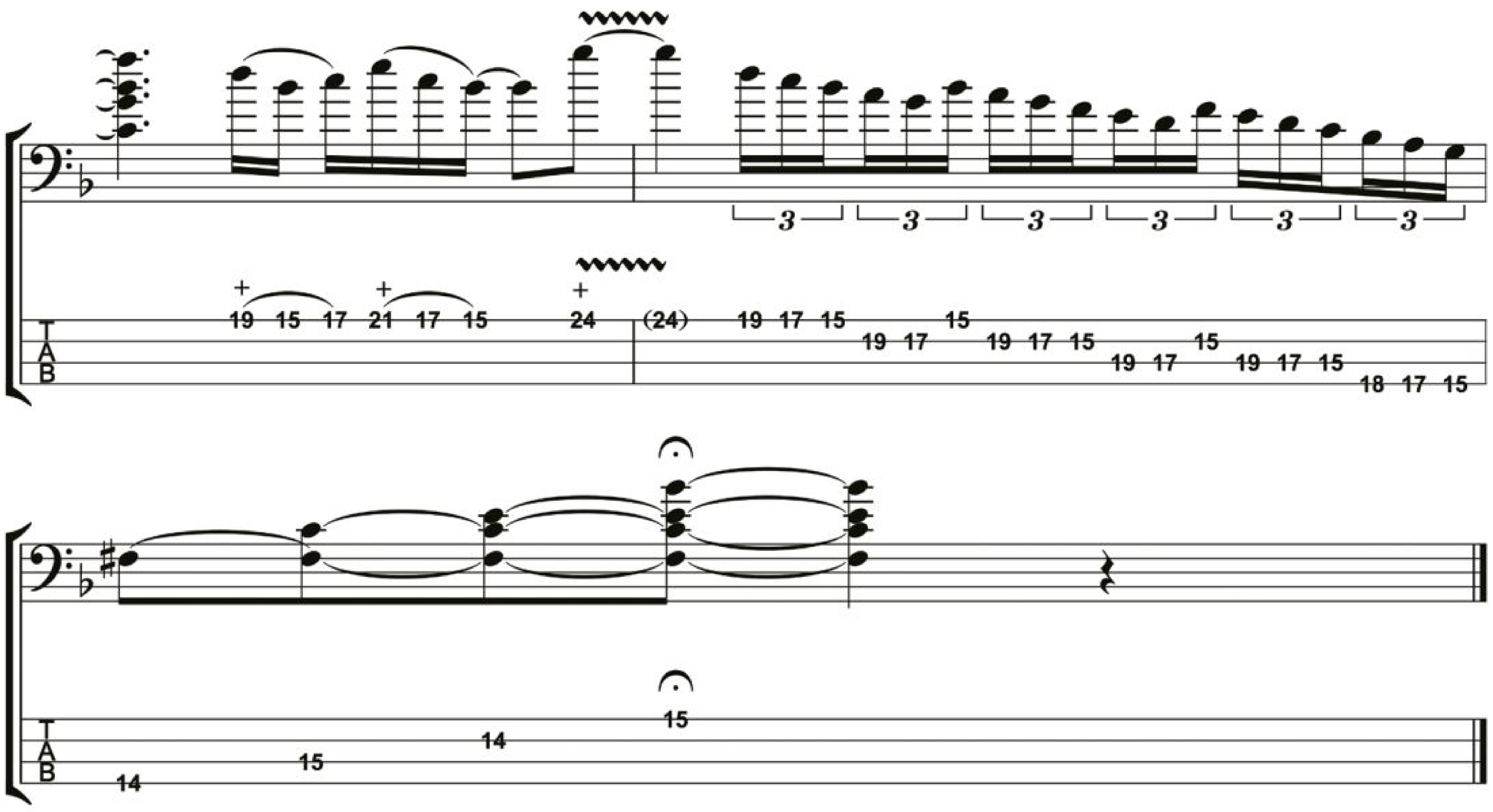
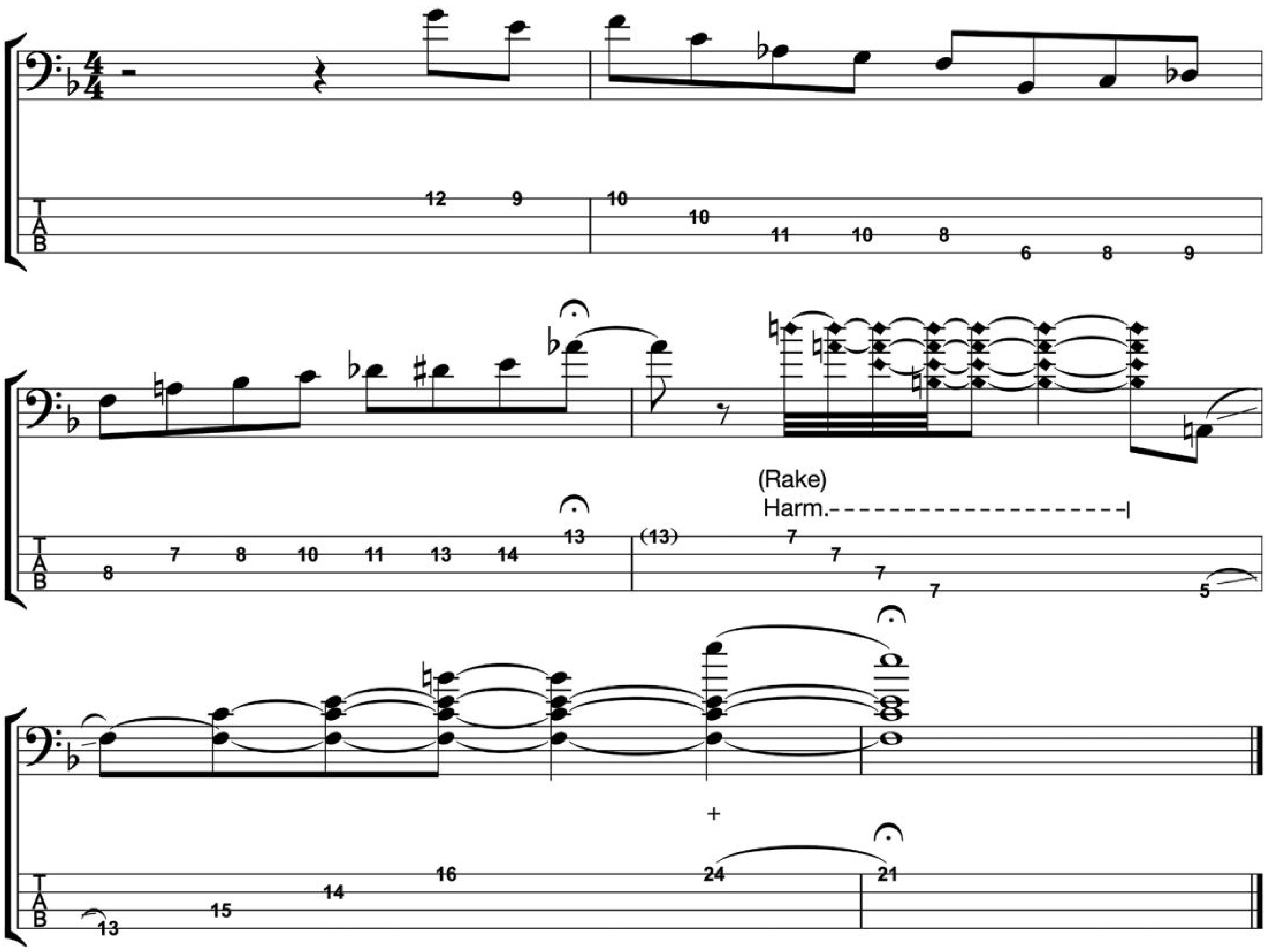
EXAMPLE 2 CONTINUED



EXAMPLE 3



G strings, and on beats three and four of the third bar, the same shape rises a whole tone to the 17th fret, creating the same chord from A. The ascending four-note chords continue in the next bar where we see a Bb major 7 with an added augmented 11th (but no 3rd), rising a tone to a C7sus4, whose fourth appears an octave higher as an 11th.

To play many of the parts shown here, I suggest that you use not only your right hand index and middle fingers, but also employ your right-hand thumb as well. When picking the successive notes on the E, A, D and G strings, I tend to use my thumb for the E string, my index for the A string, my middle finger for the D string and then my index again for the G string. If I descend again, moving from the G to the D to the A string, I tend to use my index finger for the whole descending movement, before finally playing the E string with my thumb once again. The key is to experiment and find what works best for you.

The phrase which appears in bar five is played by using a combination of right-hand tapping, using only the index finger, and hammer-ons and pull-offs, as indicated by the slurs and crosses (the latter are for right-hand taps). The sixth bar uses a fast descending semiquaver triplet run which can be played at tempo by using the raking techniques I covered in *BGM* 117 to 121. The run terminates with a Gb7b5 chord in the final bar of **example 2**, creating tension that is just waiting to be resolved in the home key of F.

Example 3 sees the 9th and the 7th of the key appear before the resolution to the note F in the second bar. The resolution is fleeting, however, since the line continues to descend in the parallel minor key, F minor, before ascending an F harmonic major scale, with the upper notes being taken from an A symmetrical diminished scale which ends on the b10, an Ab.

After a raked harmonics chord in the fourth bar, the Ab – which is the minor third of F – is resolved to the major third of the original major key, the A at the fifth fret of the E string. This A then slides up to the F at the 13th fret for the final chord. The resolution isn't too obvious, though, as an F Lydian mode is suggested by the major 7 add augmented 11th chord that appears in bar 5, rather than the standard major scale. Two high tapped notes appear to finish the whole piece off, which are a tasteful 9th followed by the major 7th, leaving the tune with a suspended feel as the last chord fades.

Next month I will be looking at putting all the ideas I have looked at over the past four issues into one coherent piece, and exploring how the use of dynamics and other indications can bring a piece like this to life. Until then...

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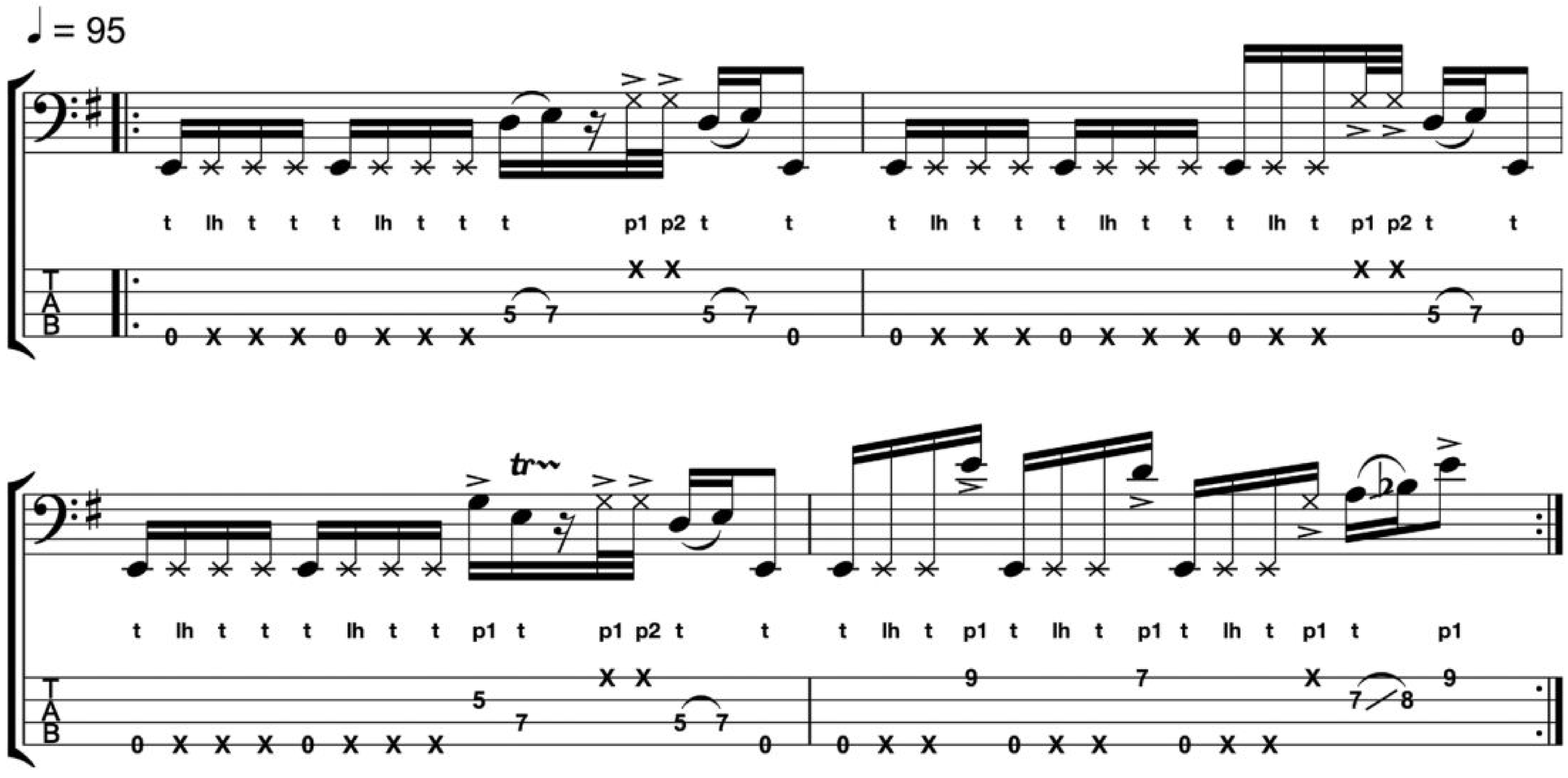
PHIL MANN

The Pizzicato delivery man has rolled up on his moped of funk for some demisemiquaver fun

In most contemporary performance environments, you will commonly find that double popping tends to come hand in hand with either quaver or semiquaver triplet patterns. However, today, among a sea of other treble-induced goodness, we're going to be focusing on the delivery of our pizzicato funk virtuosity through another subdivision: demisemiquavers!

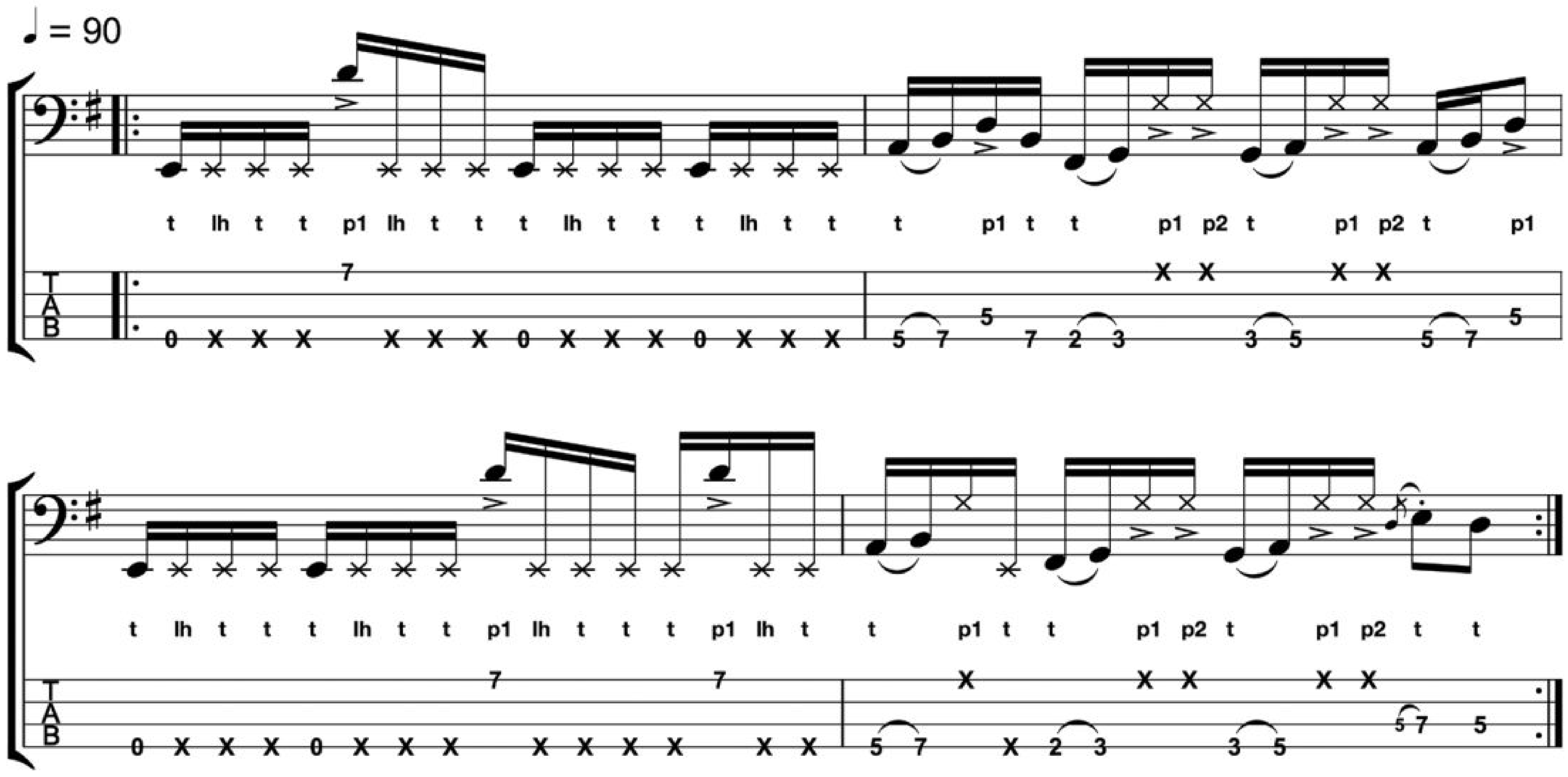
EXAMPLE 1

Example 1 tentatively introduces the manner in which we will be delivering these demisemiquavers throughout this month's studies. You'll observe that in beats one and two of the first example, both left and right hands will be required to work in efficient conjunction with one another to perform a steady stream of 16th notes, reminiscent of Mark King's seminal playing style. Beat three will be the first time in which you encounter our demisemiquavers; remember that essentially these '32nd notes' are in fact just a subdivision of semiquavers, where you are required to play two notes of the same value within the duration of a single semiquaver. Plucking two independent dead notes on the G string with your index and middle fingers will produce the specific demisemiquavers featured in **example 1**.



EXERCISE 2

Our second study continues the development of the underlying 16th note groove that features a combination of left and right-hand dead notes in **example 1**. In this example, the technique goes a stage further by introducing a technique that I struggled with when first introduced to it as a former student of the great Rob Burns. Focus your attention on beat two of the first bar: you'll notice that the phrase starts with a plucked D note on string one. Fretting this pitch with your index finger frees up the remaining three digits of the fretting hand and allows them to be used to effectively slap down onto the fretboard and produce the first of three dead notes. Leaving your fingers to rest on the strings efficiently dampens them enough to allow your thumb to strike the E string and produce a brace of percussive hits.



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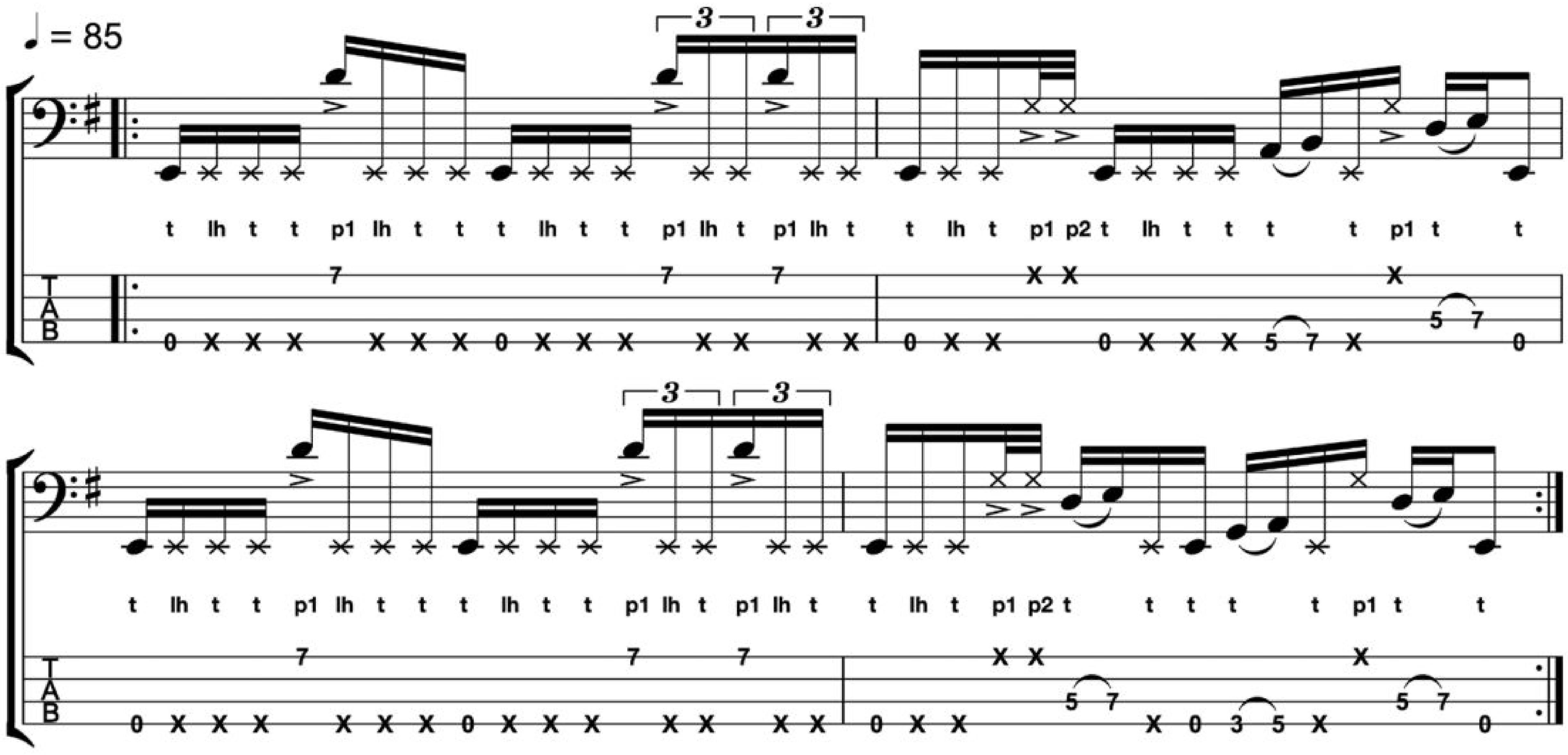
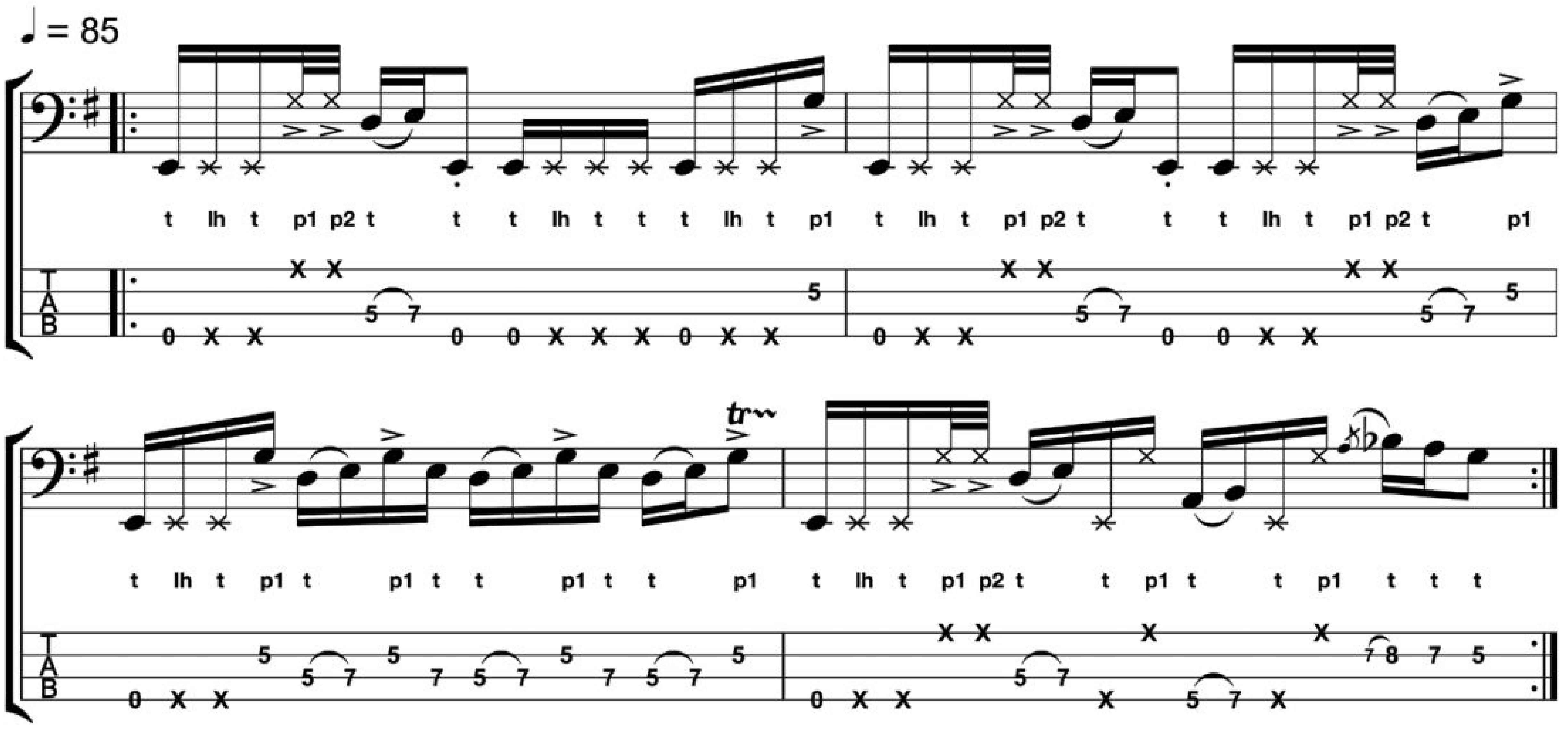
EXERCISE 3

Example 3 once again applies the demisemiquaver-based rhythmical aspects first encountered in **example 1**. This time they are enveloped by a sea of other components from **example 2** and also the introduction of semiquaver triplets. These triplet figures are produced by using the same technique applied to the execution of the 16th dead notes found in beat two of bar one. To count semiquaver triplets efficiently, think of them as two groups of three notes, each occupying the same duration as a quaver. You could try saying to yourself "tri-p-let" on the independent eighth notes, playing each of the syllables of the word as you encounter them.



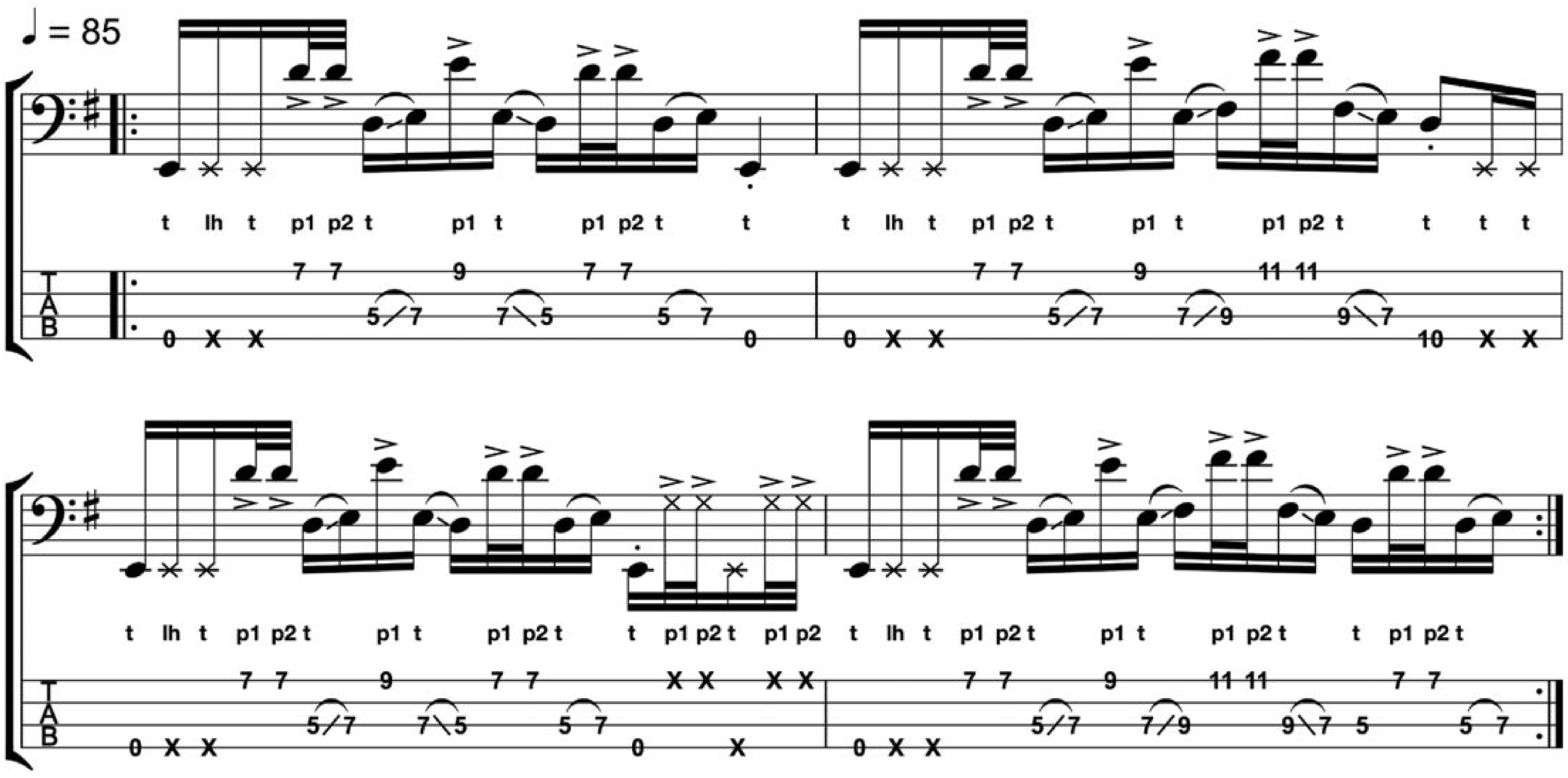
EXAMPLE 4

This month's penultimate study focuses on the demisemiquaver-enhanced 16th note pattern featured in bar two of **example 1**. Predominantly now situated on the first beat of each bar, this figure has been promoted to help establish a somewhat ostinato feel to the groove in its entirety. It may be worth considering the isolation of the rhythm found on beat one, as ensuring it is executed with precision and care will benefit the rest of the phrase.



EXAMPLE 5

Our final example features two different placements of the demisemiquaver double plucks featured in all of this month's examples. In the first bar alone you will encounter them on both the last 16th note of beat one as well as the second 16th note of beat three. Along with the sliding octaves that have suddenly appeared, I'm sure you'll have your work cut out until the next time we speak. Until then, practise hard!



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DAVID ETHERIDGE

A look at quotes and variations in double bass soloing

One important principle mentioned by Jaco in his *Modern Electric Bass* DVD is studying the top lines of tunes – not just sticking to the bass-line. This gives you a sense of the melody itself, as well as the chord progression and song structure, opening up possibilities for soloing and expanding your musical vocabulary.

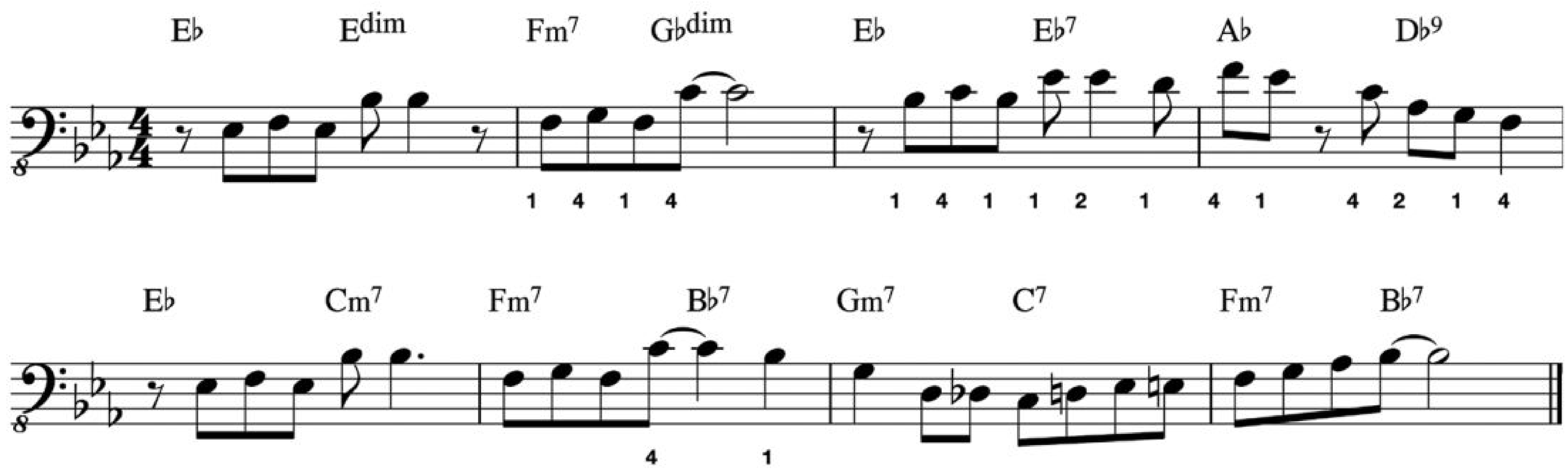
The lesson, when soloing, is not simply to solo around the melody: look at the chord sequence, which can imply extra notes and chord tones outside the melodic line. The soloing you'll find in the playing of Ray Brown, Ron Carter and John Patitucci shows this. A fun thing to do in soloing is quoting from other tunes. Lots of jazz musos do it, even me: it's great fun and fellow players and audiences appreciate it.

It's actually easy when you consider that a lot of standards follow similar chord sequences, from variations on a 12-bar, to 'Rhythm Changes' (the chords to 'I Got Rhythm' but with a different melody line and/or changes to a few of the chords) and more. Let's look at some melody excerpts, see how we can play variations on the melody itself, and quote from other tunes that fit. **Example 1** shows the first eight bars of 'Ain't Misbehavin' in Eb – a well-known standard that's always great to play, and with quite a bit of scope for chord substitution, as shown here. A simpler chord progression in the first two bars would be a I-IV-II-V or Eb-Cm7-Fm7-Bb7, but here we move up in semitones: Eb-Edim-Fm7-Gb/F#dim. These add interest and subtlety.

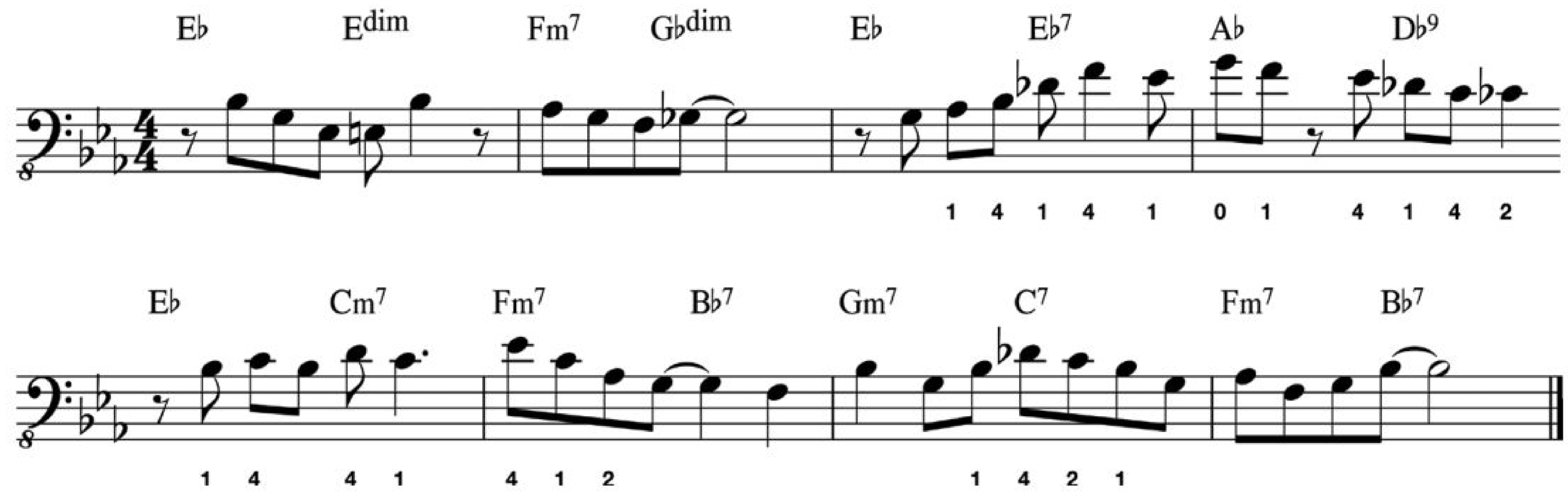
Now if we try a variation on the melody, it might look like **example 2**. Here we outline the chords in the variation, but we're also adding extensions to them: in bar 3, the top F makes the Eb7 chord an Eb9; the Ab chord in bar 4 is now an Abmaj7; at the end of bar 6 the G turns the Bb7 chord into a Bb13; and in bar 7 the C7 chord has an added b9.

If what you wanted to do was outline chord extensions further, one possibility would be to try the kind of approach outlined in **example 3**. Here we're using chord extensions again: Eb9 in bar 3; Abmaj9 followed by Db+11 (the G natural) in bar 4; Ebmaj7 and Cm7b9 in bar 5; and the odd chromatic note in the last three bars.

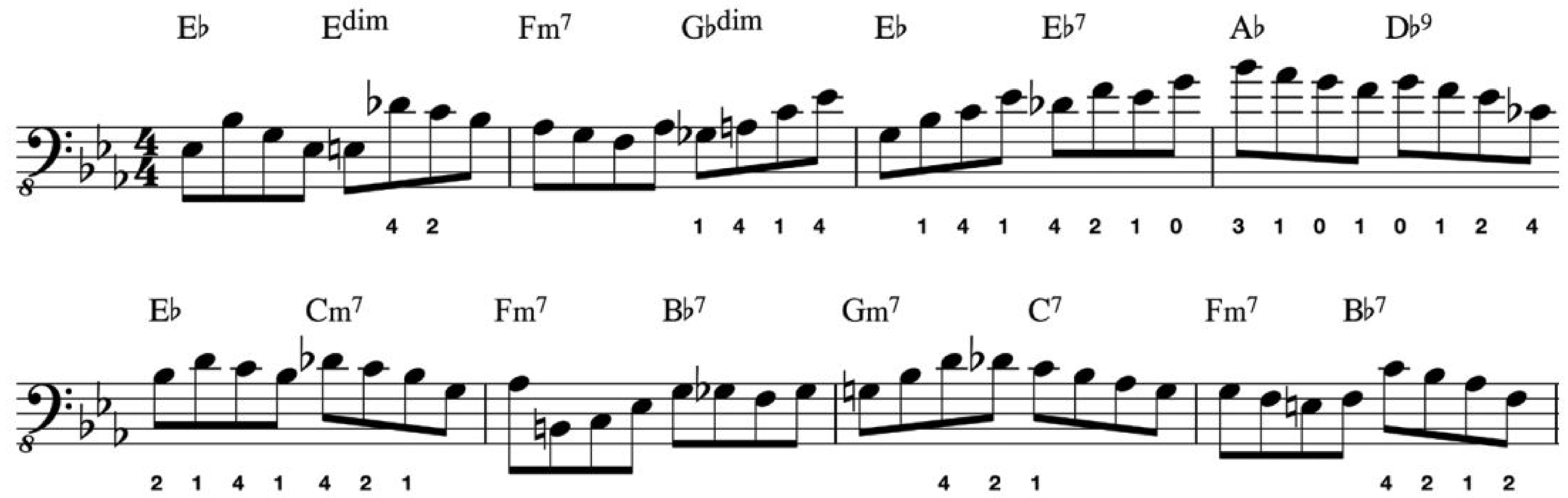
EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



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Now let's look at quoting another melody line over the same chord progression. After all, if it fits, why not use it? **Example 4** shows – well, you've probably guessed it – 'Tiptoe Through The Tulips'. You may have to change a chord or note here or there to fit in with either the melody you're quoting or the chord sequence, or even change a melody in a major key to a minor or vice versa. It's all part of the fun, and there are others that also fit this progression.

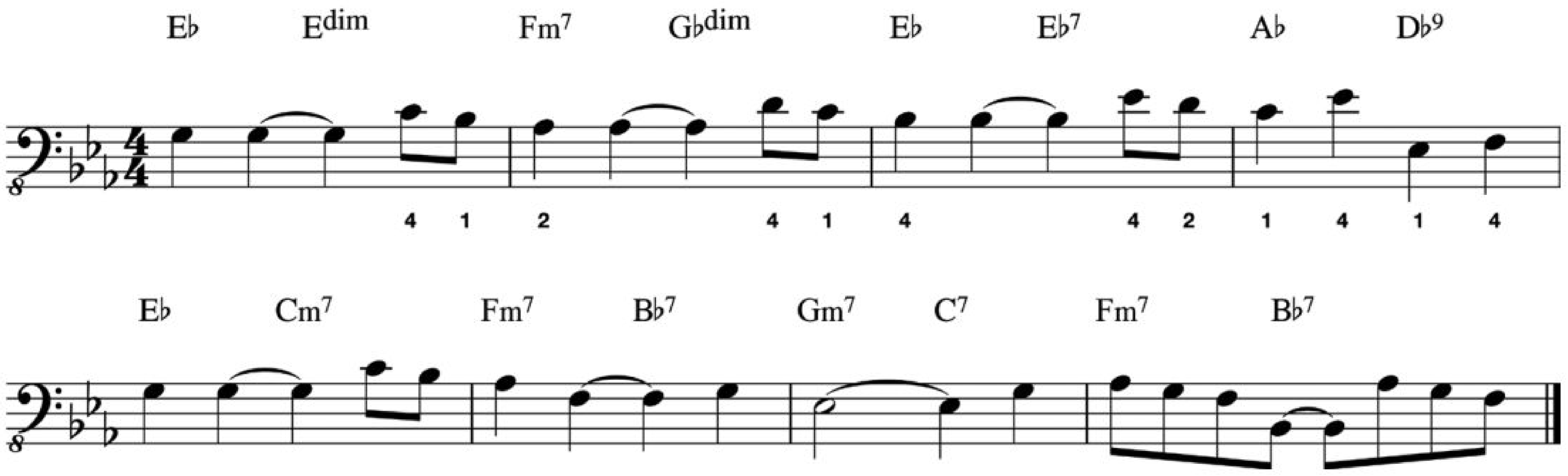
Let's look how we could add quotes. **Example 5** shows no fewer than three quotations in just eight bars. First we have 'Fascinating Rhythm' over the first four bars, deliberately displacing the phrase to add tension and interest. Even though with the notes chosen some might seem 'wrong', in practice it sounds great, adding substitutions. In bar 4, for instance, the low C will actually transform the GM7 into a C11. This is yet another example of the principle where the bass note transforms the whole harmonic content: we've seen in earlier examples and columns how the notes you choose in a solo can imply all sorts of harmonic interest, rather than just playing over the melody as a starting point.

Coming back to the second half of **example 5**, we've got 'All Of The Trees Seem To Whisper Louise' for two bars, and for good measure in the last two bars 'Jumping With Symphony Sid' (a legendary jazz DJ of the 1950s, in case you didn't know). **Example 6** shows another approach to the chord progression, with displaced phrasing over the II-V chords, but in bar 4 I've substituted some new chords: Bdim-Bbm7-Am7-Abdim-Gm7-C7-F, which, as you can see, offers yet more possibilities in where you can go with your musical ideas.

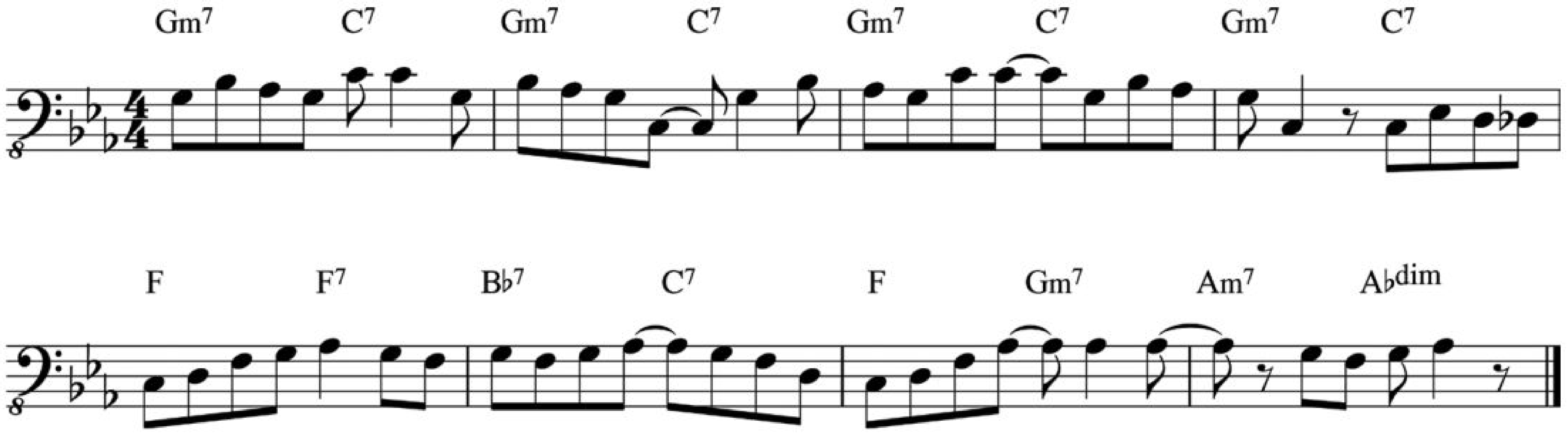
Obviously these are just starting points for further development. In your own solo phrases, as I suggested last time, you can use individual phrases as jumping off points for exploration and development. Even with quotes, the sky's the limit in how you can transform them. Either use them as they are, add chord substitutions and change the melody line to follow your chordal ideas, change major to minor and vice versa, and also invent harmony lines and inversions to your original phrases.

But there's more: you can take your musical quote and invent variations. Turn them upside down, reverse them, and do both together. If you think that concept is a bit abstruse, it has historical precedent in classical 12-tone music where tone rows were inverted and reversed. The result still sounded (to quote a jazz drummer friend of mine) "like a zoo burning down", but let that pass. Use the concepts, ideas and quotes as your building blocks for your solos. It'll add tremendously to your creativity, and there's not a preplanned mode in sight!

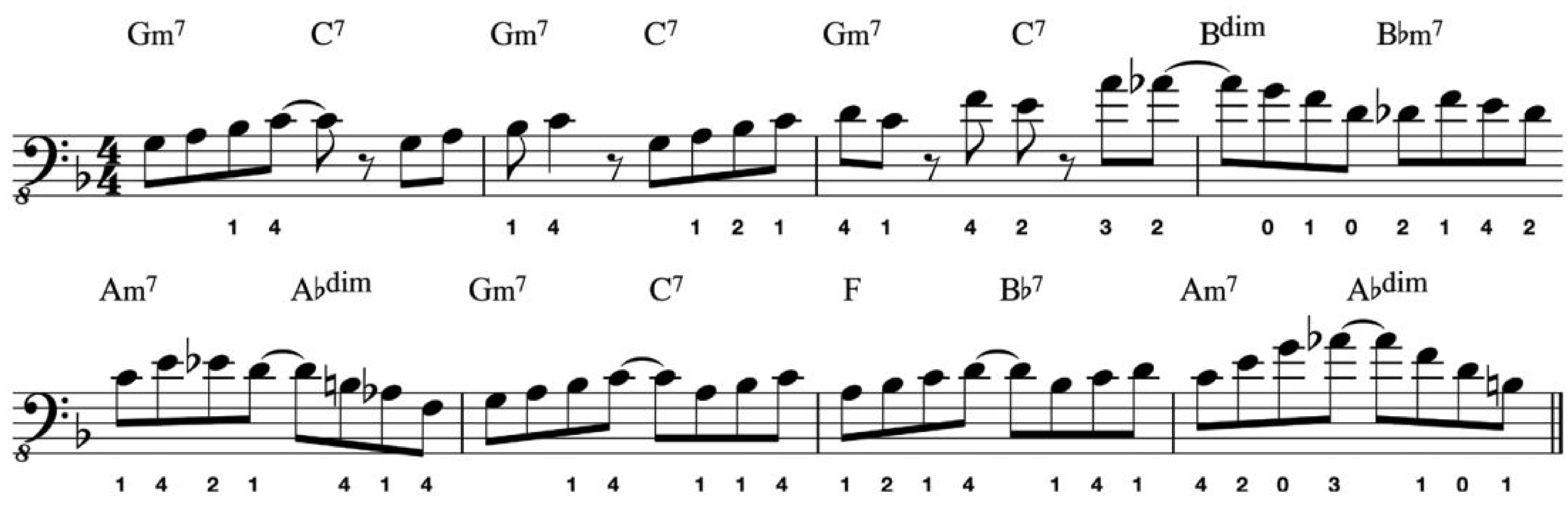
EXAMPLE 4



EXAMPLE 5



EXAMPLE 6



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STEVE LAWSON

Be prepared to get experimenting, says 'Brown Owl' Lawson

As any former boy scout or girl guide knows, preparation is key to the success of any venture. However, in our context, 'preparing' your instrument can mean something very different. The idea of a 'prepared' instrument predates the electric bass by a few decades, and was popularised and properly developed by John Cage (he of 4'33" fame, the 'silent' piece). Cage would stick things in, on or under the strings of a piano to change the tone. Pretty much any object will work – I've seen paper, ping pong balls, screws, blue-tack, paper clips and a ton of other stuff used to make a piano sound very unlike a piano indeed.

Which brings us to the bass guitar, and a sideways look at the 'effect' bit of our pedals and effects focus – because not everything you do to make your bass sound different has to involve pedals and processing. There's a long and rich history of bassists and guitarists applying 'prepared' ideas to their instruments. Musicians such as Fred Frith, Janet Feder and the great Kev Hopper (ex-Stump and now in avant-prog trio Prescott) have explored a host of ways to really mess with strings.

Most of the preparations listed for piano above will work. Some of them will rely on you laying the bass across your lap to stop them falling off (if you're rolling balls along the strings, for example) and almost all of them will require you to think laterally about the kind of sound you're going to get, and what to do with it. Do this, and a beautiful world of sounds may open up.

Let's look at just a couple of the possible options. One of the most commonly-used methods is inserting paper under the strings, or weaving it through them. The size of the paper will greatly affect the sound you get, as will whether you put it by the bridge, down over the frets or somewhere in between. Thinner strips of paper will leave you getting something more like an altered bass sound, while bigger, thicker bits of paper will turn your bass into a strange percussion instrument. With all these kinds of techniques, dropping the tuning right down offers a whole other set of options, as the strings get way more flexible.

As well as paper, chopsticks can be woven into the strings, and they have the advantage of being twangable too! Other kinds of thin sticks, pens, pencils and so on can be used if you've got six strings or more. It's possible to weave a chopstick into three strings and play chords, or a tapped line on the other three. You can really go to town on the combinations here.

Here's one you can actually have a listen to: the track 'Solipsism' from Michael Manring's definitive solo album *Soliloquy* is played on a bass which has paper clips attached to the strings. By the sounds of things, the tuning's been messed with too. Then again, this is Michael Manring we're talking about – of course it's been messed with! You've got *Soliloquy*, haven't you? It really is required listening for anyone pursuing the outer reaches of what's imaginable on this beautiful instrument of ours.

So over to you. What have you got lying around the house that you can attach to the strings of your bass to change the sound? Any other (reversible!) physical modifications you can make to your bass to produce new sounds? Feel free to send me a message via social media or my website to tell me what you've discovered!

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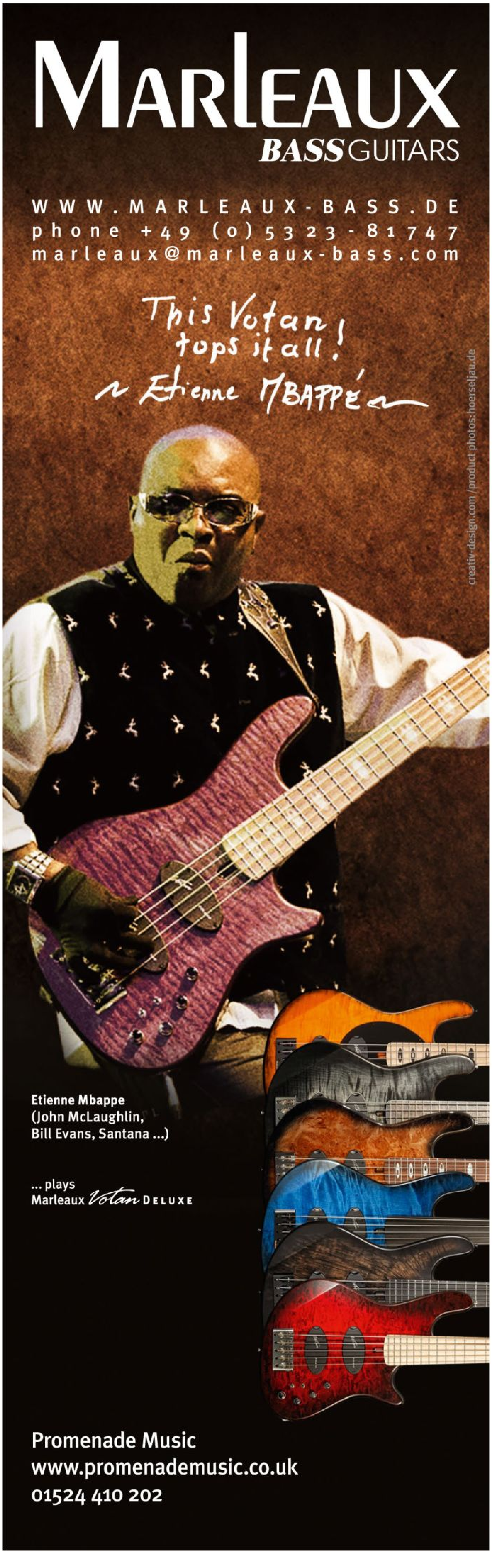

Classic

BASS ALBUMS

Mike Brooks looks back at Stanley Clarke's epic *Live 1976-1977* album

Stanley Clarke had released four solo albums, including the classic *School Days*, by the time he took his band on the road in late 1976 – and although his tenure in the fusion band Return To Forever was about to come to an unexpected halt, this album (released in 1991) shows no lack of energy, dynamism or spirit. For many of Stanley's fans, this album captures the great man at his jazzy, funky best. The sound quality of the recordings is superb with many of the tracks elongated versions of their original form on the studio recordings.

Have no fear, the musicianship is exemplary – with Ray Gomez (guitar) and Gerry Brown (drums) forming a great core band with Stan, while the four-piece horn section are the icing on the cake, adding a musical gloss to the arrangements. Stanley's electric bass of choice at the time was his beloved 'Brown Bass', an Alembic four-string of course, strung with Rotosound roundwound steel strings: Stanley was an early adopter of the Superwound variants. In terms of amplification, videos show a mix of Fender guitar combos for the high end, Ampeg cabinets, Alembic preamps and Crown power amps, the Alembic instrument facilitating stereo splitting of his signal.

First up is 'School Days', undoubtedly Stanley's most famous track and featuring his most famous riff. Those strummed chords must have been a real eye-opener for any up-and-coming bassist at that time. Check out the plucked octaves and vibrato at 2'40", and his bass solo from 3'41", which features many of his trademark techniques, such as harmonic bends and staccato raking. Another Stanley favourite, 'Lopsy Lu', follows, a dynamic showcase for his legendary slap technique with a killer groove and a great supportive performance by the rest of the band. The song slowly builds until he pulls the instrumentation right back before unleashing the horn section at 6'12".

'Quiet Afternoon' is a laid back affair, a muted trumpet and flute carrying the intro melodies before Stanley picks up the verse melody on bass and then hands soloing duties to Alfie Williams on sax. Think of a chilled summer afternoon doing nothing but relaxing – this is the soundtrack. 'Silly Putty' follows hot on its heels, a slippery, greasy slice of bass-led funk if ever there was one, featuring bent harmonics at 1'05", 2'10" and 4'49" and double stops at 4'55".

'Dayride', the first of two Return To Forever covers, is the only track recorded in the UK at Hammersmith Odeon in London in June 1977, and though the bass fulfils a much more supportive role on this number, the horn section and Gerry Brown's drums create a driving (no pun intended) energy on the track.

'Bass Folk Song No. 3' is a duet between Stanley on upright bass and David Sancious (Sting's keyboard player and pianist in more recent times) on piano, an exemplary demonstration of Stanley's extensive upright technique. At over 13 minutes in length, it offers a significant departure from the electric bass performances preceding it. 'The Magician', the other Return To Forever cover, and 'Vulcan Princess', from Stanley's second album, are far more fusion-based than the other tracks and highlight the level of musicianship on display: audiences on this tour were truly served a musical feast. 'Desert Song' was recorded at Electric Lady Studios in New York and features the jazz legend John McLaughlin on acoustic guitar: although it's not a live track, it fits the mood of the album perfectly.

This album reminds us just what a ground-breaking talent Stanley was. Asked about this record in *BGM* and elsewhere, he has said that this was possibly the most fun he had with a band on the road: from the evidence, it's clear to see and hear why.

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